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ABSTRACT

This document contains 41 plenary papers, speeches, papers, abstracts, and workshop presentations from a conference on continuing education, lifelong learning, equity, and inclusion in further education (FE) and higher education (HE). The following are among the papers included: "A New Way of Learning: The UfI (University for Industry) Network Developing the University for Industry Concept" (Ann Wright); "The Challenge of Inclusion to Higher Education Institutions" (Roderick Floud); "Lifelong Learning in the Mainstream Issues of Access and Equity" (Graeme John Davies); "The Contribution of Lifelong Learning to an Equitable and Inclusive Society" (John Daniel); "The Transition of Disabled Students into Higher Education" (Len Spriggs); "'Unlocking Potential': Accreditation for Socially Excluded Young People" (Pat Davies, Julia Carter); "Ethnic Minority Staff in Higher Education" (Geoff Chivers); "The Experience of Older Learners and the Influence of Context" (Tilda Gaskell); "Is Your University Supporting Lifelong Learning for Its Own Staff?" (Malcolm Sunderland, Daniel Vulliamy); "Work Based Learning and Access to Higher Education" (Carol Costley); "Work-Related Learning, Equity and Inclusion" (Dick Taylor); "Credit and Credibility: Personal Development Plans for Lifelong Learning" (Lyn Brennan, Alison Hirst); "The Role of Learner Parents in Widening Participation" (Cal Weatherald, Diane Burns); "Equity and Inclusion in Home-Based Lifelong Learning" (Keith Percy, Hilary Thomas); "Learning Strategies: Case Studies of

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Local Community Learning Initiatives" (Helen Godfrey, Sue Gruellich); "The Classroom as Community: Dynamics of Race and Gender" (Jane Hoy, Rajni Kumrai); "Issues in the Provision of Education for Inner City Groups, Especially Community Development Groups" (Brid Connolly); "Action Learning for Local Development: A Community Based Project, in Coventry" (Jane Watts); "A Kind of Higher Education for Adult Learners in Community Settings" (Ann-Marie Houghton, Julia Preece); "Inclusive Partnerships for Cultural Diversity and Development" (Patricia Whaley, Asthma Shaffi); "Creating Partnerships for Pathways: How Do We Ensure Inclusive Partnership between FE and HE?" (Lydia Merryl); "Lifelong Learning Practitioners' Engagement with Change" (Diane Burns); "Social Inclusion and Adult Learning" (John Field); "European Universities: How Accessible Are They for Adults?" (Barbara Merrill, Tom Collins); and "Capacity Building through New Technology" (Rob Harrison, Angie Piesold). Some papers contain substantial bibliographies. (MN)

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UNIVERSITIES ASSOCIATION *for Continuing Education*

UACE Annual Conference 1999

LIFELONG LEARNING, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Proceedings

ED 455 370

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UACE Annual Conference 1999

Lifelong Learning, Equity and Inclusion

Proceedings

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Preface

This year the annual Universities Association for Continuing Education (UACE) Conference, hosted by the University of Cambridge Board of Continuing Education, was held at Churchill College, Cambridge between 29th and 31st March. The conference has become a key event for the discussion of policy and the dissemination of new work among workers in adult continuing higher education.

This year the conference theme *Lifelong Learning, Equity and Inclusion* reflected several of the leitmotifs which shoot through the Dearing, Kennedy and Fryer Reports as well as the recent 'Green' paper consultation on *The Learning Age*. This generic theme allowed conference members to explore aspects of inclusion for groups involved with community based and continuing vocational education, work or home-based students, those concerned with urban and/or rural issues, and those concerned with students having individual needs.

It was attended by over 150 delegates, representing almost every university department of continuing education, together with representatives from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), the Universities Central Admissions Service (UCAS), the Further Education Funding Council and the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE). Representatives from as far away as Estonia, the Netherlands, Finland, Malta and Hong Kong contributed to the discussions, bringing a welcome international perspective.

The conference was opened by the University's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir Alec Broers, and Mr Michael Malone-Lee, Vice-Chancellor of Anglia Polytechnic University and followed by a key-note speech from Dr Anne Wright, the Chief Executive for the University for Industry, exploring the vision and values of the UfI which will play a key role in delivering the Government's vision for lifelong learning by brokering and facilitating the provision of, and participation in, learning opportunities to meet skills' needs.

Other keynote addresses were delivered by Dr Roderick Floud, Provost of London Guildhall University, who suggested that higher education should define and exploit its comparative advantage in the multi-agency approach to social exclusion which is now developing; and by Professor Sir Graeme Davies, Principal of the University of Glasgow who suggested that there is a danger that those in a weak social position may be marginalised by lifelong learning. Without creating a 'Culture of Lifelong Learning' - and providing the means to support it - among the majority of the population, we risk missing an opportunity to contribute to building a stronger society where people understand the importance and benefits of developing their talents and abilities.

Alongside these larger visions of policy and its direction in the immediate future, the conference also organised six workshops on each of the two main days of the events. These presented delegates with an impossible choice - which would be more exciting: 'Community Capacity Building through New Technologies' or 'Equity and Inclusion in Home-Based Lifelong Learning'? or 'Widening Participation and Inter-Generational Education' compared with 'Creating Partnerships for Pathways?'. An already full programme was extended by meetings of the nine UACE networks.

The extent to which ideas were being generated, stimulated and communicated through this enormously rich environment could be judged by the high volume of noise unleashed every time delegates were able to talk to each other. Old colleagues were greeted with enthusiasm, new contacts were made, and - above all - the thoughts provoked by the conference created a full learning experience.

Cultural opportunities included access to the Churchill Archives, the Fitzwilliam Museum, the new public gallery of the University Library and the traditional tour of Cambridge on an open-top bus. Delegates were also invited to a reception at Madingley Hall, headed by the Chairman or the Board of Continuing Education, Sir David Harrison. A stimulating after dinner speech by Baroness Nora David, a tireless champion of Lifelong Learning in the House of Lords, enriched the conference dinner. The evening closed with jazz, though not on this occasion from the 'UACE Big Band'.

The Conference was rounded off by a keynote address from Sir John Daniel, Vice-Chancellor of the Open University, who warned delegates that lifelong learning is in danger of becoming a cliché before it becomes a reality. Although it is important to keep people current for employment, the more important impact of lifelong learning may be its effects in encouraging people to become more active in their communities and in prompting a more equitable and inclusive society.

Michael Richardson
Director of the Board of Continuing Education and Secretary of UACE

Editor's Introduction

The 40 abstracts, papers and keynote speeches collected in these proceedings represent state of the art in thinking about Lifelong Learning and its relation to our 21st Century social agenda. Together, the papers are remarkable for their breadth of contexts and compass, but also for their grasp of the detailed mechanics of particular projects and initiatives. It has also been a pleasure to read so many authors who can write without affectation, and with incision. This is perhaps not surprising - many of these authors have learned the hard way how to weave between rhetoric and reality. But still it is very welcome that so much of the prose style here exemplifies the openness that, as frequently recommended in the same papers, should also characterize our programmes, policies and institutions; the thought that a learning society is, of necessity, an open society. There is here a open recognition of the failures to achieve equity, and the difficulties that still stand in the way, coupled with a determination to overcome them and move forward, which is a credit to the CE community. The papers finally received seemed to fall naturally enough into a set of contexts in which the issues of equity and inclusion either arise or might be solved and it seemed appropriate to arrange them accordingly. It will, I hope, be recognized that there are multiple points of connection between these contexts which means that the categories employed here can only be a very crude guide to content.

Thanks are due to all the contributors for providing copies of their paper; to those who allowed me to twist their arms into being rapportuers at the conference, for Shelley Lockwood for chasing, collating and calming, and, especially, for the painstaking transcription of the keynote speeches and to Suzanne Irwin for final proofing and co-ordination. Equity demands that the mistakes that remain are mine.

Ian Ground
Editor

PLENARY PAPERS & SPEECHES

Opening Address

Professor Sir Alec Broers
Vice-Chancellor, University of Cambridge

It is of course a very great pleasure to welcome you all to Cambridge and to Cambridge University and then Mike will welcome you also to Cambridge and to Anglia Polytechnic University: two very complementary institutions. I would like to thank Mike for inviting me to welcome you. Michael is the Director of Continuing Education at the University of Cambridge, as you all know, and is Honorary Secretary of your society, UACE. I think I can, in fact, welcome you as one of yourselves in many ways; I spent a lot of my career participating both in teaching and in learning in continuing education. My subject is microelectronics. When I graduated from this university in the mid-sixties microelectronics did not really exist. It is a rather good example of how if you were to be an electronic engineer and you did not go in for continuing education you would not have been able to exist over the last twenty or thirty years. But of course continuing education is a very broad subject; it covers the whole spectrum of arts and humanities and institutions, not only universities but also all sorts of other institutions. I am particularly pleased that the two of us are up here today, Michael and myself, to welcome you. Perhaps there should be other institutions as well, but this society is primarily concerned with universities.

It is particularly appropriate that Cambridge should be the location of the UACE conference in the last year of this millennium as Cambridge, slightly ahead of the other place (Oxford) I am pleased to say, was in fact the first UK university, at least south of the border (the Scots are always ahead of us in education), to take seriously the obligations of continuing education to a wider public and become involved in what was known then as University Extension. From my point of view there is another place where it comes home to roost because our first director of continuing education in the University of Cambridge was one of my predecessors. I was Head of Engineering here before becoming Vice-Chancellor and the first director of continuing education was James Stuart, a Scot, and the first Professor of Engineering and a Fellow of Trinity who started continuing education at about the same time as he started the Engineering Department in Cambridge in the 1870s. He undertook almost single-handedly, yet successfully, a campaign to persuade the university community that it should make its academic capital available to those outside its walls. You will visit Madingley Hall later today and will see a commemorative Honours board which indicates that in the last quarter of the last century there were Cambridge Local Centres as far afield as Exeter and Newcastle-upon-Tyne and not a few of these in fact became the next generation of civic universities. And this tradition of spreading learning to all aspects of our society, the tradition of inclusion, as we say, is one upon which we and all universities with a commitment to lifelong learning have sought to build.

We are in fact fortunate in this time when our government is on our side as well and the government and our profession of teaching and research are working together, effectively I think, to seek the best ways forward. The issue of lifelong learning has perhaps never been higher in the public agenda than it is today and we must seek to embed it firmly in the framework of university activity. Brian Fender, the Chief Executive of HEFCE, in launching this month a major initiative to bring higher education nearer to the needs of industry, business and the community said 'We believe that this should be a third core activity for universities and colleges alongside the teaching and research and we propose to support it by a new stream of funding.'
Finally, I would just like to say that the theme of this conference - lifelong learning, equity and inclusion - reflects in a timely way also the vision set out by our Secretary of State, David Blunkett. I am a great fan of David Blunkett's; he is working very hard on all aspects of education, he has recognised diversity in the university sector and he is trying to introduce excellence across the whole of the educational spectrum as I think it is illustrated by his words in the spirited foreword to *The Learning Age*:

> 'To cope with rapid change and the challenge of the communications age we must ensure that people can return to learning throughout their lives. We cannot rely on a small elite no matter how highly educated or highly paid. Instead we need the creativity, enterprise and scholarship of all of our people. As well as securing our economic future, learning has a wider contribution. It helps make ours a civilised society, develops the spiritual side of our lives and promotes active citizenship. Learning enables people to play a full part in their community, it strengthens the family, the neighbourhood and consequently the nation. It helps fulfil our potential and opens doors to a love of music, art and literature. That is why we value learning for its own sake as well as for the equality of opportunity it brings.'

Those are David Blunkett's words and he goes on to say more, but clearly what he is saying is that you are at the centre of his ideas and of what have become the government and the nation's ideas. So this conference is particularly appropriate this year and you have perhaps got a more important task than you have had before in that you are centre-stage. So it is a very great pleasure to welcome you to Cambridge and now I will hand over to Michael Malone-Lee.

Opening Address

Mr Mike Malone-Lee
Vice-Chancellor, Anglia Polytechnic University

Well, like Alec, I would like to welcome you on behalf of what is sometimes described as 'the other university in Cambridge' as one of the joint hosts for this conference. I congratulate you on the importance and topicality of the subject you have chosen for this year's conference - equity and inclusion - and I understand that because conferences have to be planned so far in advance that this subject was chosen eighteen months to two years ago before equity and inclusion became so politically correct as it is today. So you have clearly discerned the signs of the times. Now any welcome, even the warmest welcome can be too protracted so I just have two brief points to make.

The first point I want to make is that it is symbolic and significant that two universities are co-hosting this year's conference, the one founded in the thirteenth century, the other established as a university only in 1992. The one a great international university with an unequalled record in research and scholarship, the other with a history going back a century and a half of providing education to a wide spectrum of the population from in and around this area. My university was originally established, although it was not a university then, in 1858 in Cambridge and has, since 1858, been engaged in what we would now call continuing education. And I think it is very significant that two such divergent institutions, each proud of the place they hold in higher education, can work together. One of the areas in which the two universities are working together is in extending the benefits of a university education to the disadvantaged and we are sharing in a piece of research to identify those areas in this region with low participation rates and also to identify ways of overcoming obstacles to entry to higher education. So that is the first point.

The second point I want to make is about the distribution of social exclusion. You are holding your conference this year in probably one of the most affluent towns in the United Kingdom; unemployment in Cambridge is very low and there are more graduates per head of population in Cambridge than I think more or less any other city in the country. Churchill College, as you will have observed, is a pretty grand place, but this evening you will be at Madingley Hall. I hope it is a fine evening because those of you who do not know Madingley Hall will see that it is a place of breathtaking elegance and beauty. It is almost like a real life film set, all you would need this evening is Gwyneth Paltrow in a walking-on part. And yet, even in this city there are wards where unemployment and social exclusion are high, where expectations, aspirations and achievements are low. You only have to drive a very few miles to the East and you will find yourself in the Fens where there is deep rural poverty with all its attendant problems; again, expectations, aspirations, opportunity and achievement are low. Now all of you here and the two universities co-hosting this conference are committed to doing something to reverse this state of affairs. I noticed your conference agenda has a very rich mixture of papers which come at the problems of social inclusion from all angles. It is an enormously difficult problem to tackle and I do not think any single agency can tackle it in isolation. But governments look for quick results and I do not believe that there are any quick results to be gained here. Allocating extra university places to extend higher education is a noble policy and idea but it will not of itself solve problems of social inclusion. There are published this morning two reports, one by the Treasury and the other by the Rowntree Foundation and they both point up the growing gap in this country between the rich and the poor and I think it is the Treasury report which says that 11 million people within the population are living in poverty. It is truly astonishing to find the Treasury acknowledging those sort of facts. And the reports go on to point out that children brought up in poor families learn to have reduced aspirations. So your agenda is both topical and important but it is a very long haul ahead. So I wish you a successful conference in engaging in these very important issues. Thank you very much.

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A New Way of Learning. The Ufl Network - Developing the University for Industry Concept

Dr Anne Wright CBE

Chief Executive University for Industry

It is a great pleasure to be here at what is a very important conference. It is also a very timely one as far as I am concerned and as far as the development of the University for Industry is concerned. Just over a week ago Ufl published its development plan, looking ahead to what I think will be a very exciting operational launch next year. So this is a great opportunity for me to share with you our plans and also to be able to take your views at this formative stage. What I am going to talk about is University for Industry, vocational lifelong learning and higher education. I thought I would first make some quite brief opening remarks about vocational lifelong learning and higher education in a context of today's agenda, and then to go on to talk, quite unashamedly really, about Ufl, which I think is a flagship commitment to the Learning Age. I will then tell you what the next steps are for us as we go forward towards operation next year. And I will conclude with some ideas abut what Ufl can contribute to higher education in helping universities and institutions to meet their objectives and also how higher education can engage with the Ufl learning network.

Higher education and vocational lifelong learning

So first of all then a few comments about higher education and vocational lifelong learning, taking, very broadly, the role of universities overall in relation to the community and to business. It seems to me that now, as never before, universities have a mainstream role to play in developing the people resource for the community as well as contributing to ideas. It seems to me that the role of universities is, of course, to contribute to educational development, but also very visibly, clearly and explicitly to contribute to economic and social and cultural development. And one of the reasons that that is now possible is because of the growth of higher education and its extension to many more people in the community, both young people and older people. Also, the position of universities in all the major conurbation areas and more besides, means that not just individuals, but also employers and businesses are within daily reach of universities and what they can contribute both in learning and in research. The kind of contribution that higher education can make, it seems to me, to the community can be summed up in this phrase, which I like, as 'a resource and a generator'. But a resource and a generator for people as well as for knowledge, for knowledge and learning, for people and ideas, for expertise and know-how - a very rounded contribution. And doing so through partnerships and networks which can be achieved now as never before because of the pivotal position that the single university sector has in all our communities. Through partnerships and networks, not just with education, but across all sectors and linking very strongly with industry and business.

The vision that I think it is now possible to have for higher education is one in which universities and other institutions can promote community-wide lifelong learning for individuals and companies and business sectors in the fullest possible sense and most rounded way. Sometimes when I think of that, and at Sunderland, when I looked around at the city and where we had arrived at, it seemed to me that we were poised to be able to grasp a vision of total interpenetration of the knowledge industry (which in a way universities are) with the life and growth and quality of life and inclusion and prosperity of the whole community. And in such a way that if we look I hope just ten years, perhaps fifteen years ahead, we would have reached the point at which universities and learning partnerships, right across the array of providers and what they stand for, would be not just a step away for companies and for individuals, but no more than a thought away, to meet all their learning and skills needs throughout their lives. So that is the vision, for me of higher education and the role it can play in the community and that particularly applies to vocational lifelong learning.

Now as never before, vocational lifelong learning is at the heart of the project of higher education. Continuing education and continuing education departments or lifelong learning departments as they are now often being described, are no longer, if they ever were, at the periphery, the rim, the margins, they are not simply about reaching out and promoting access, but are at the heart of the overall project for lifelong learning. This can be seen in access initiatives, in flexible delivery, in the kinds of routes and programs we structure, or looking further on to people after a stage of initial access to higher education, to the value of workplace and work-based learning, reaching right through to engage with continuing professional development at the one end, as well as entry knowledge and skills at the other. So we do reach the vision which I have tried to describe in which individuals and businesses can engage with higher education at the point of their learning and skills needs throughout their lives and right across the community. So for me we are now seeing, with the kind of policy, focus and agenda that we have, the mainstreaming of lifelong learning and mainstreaming in a way which means that we do not have to continue the sometimes arid debates between the academic and the vocational, between knowledge and skills, but can genuinely have the prospect of the realisation of a vision in which we can do all of the things that individuals need at every point in their lives.

Key policy themes

As has already been said, this government is committed in many ways and right across departments and through many policies to achieving the vision of social inclusion as well as a business competitiveness. I would like to make the point that I do not think we need to think of those objectives and policies in separate compartments. They are all about helping people to build better lives for themselves and helping to ensure that, in order to achieve that, the UK continues to be able to compete with the best in the world in industry and business. So it is in itself an inclusive vision, not one that is divided; it is not 'either ... or', it is 'both ... and'. The key policy themes are ones which I am sure you will recognise because, in the 'education, education, education' agendas of the government, we see them recurring in a variety of contexts, on a variety of levels. Widening access and participation, raising standards and meeting the skills agenda were the priorities which Baroness Blackstone enunciated last week when I heard her speak in the context of the Further Education Funding Council's latest initiative to promote ICT-based learning. Those were the strategic drivers. But those, of course, could just as easily be applied in the context of higher education or in schools and looking right across at lifelong learning. And you will all be familiar with the emphasis on regional policy and collaboration coming through many policies, most recently in the HEROBIC initiative of the Higher Education Funding Council, looking across also to the agenda of departments like DTI and the creation of the Regional Development Agencies and looking ahead, perhaps, to regional government. So we can see a framework vision reflected in key policy themes at the highest level which then track themselves into particular initiatives which can apply to the higher education sector and to vocational lifelong learning.

University for Industry

What I want to move on to now is the University for Industry. The University for Industry has been described, and is still described, by ministers as the flagship of the Learning Age vision and the Learning Age agenda. This is very much about lifelong learning and vocational lifelong learning, stretching right across the community. It is a partnership endeavour, linking educational providers with many other sectors. It is something which can help us to achieve the vision of a Learning Society. I am Chief Executive of the UfI and we are carrying forward the concept of the University for Industry and helping to make it happen as a broker, a facilitator and an animator. As I said, this conference is timely, because, just over a week ago, UfI launched our Development Plan. There are two brochures: a brief general brochure for the new reader and also a longer one particularly aimed at our partners and particularly educational partners and providers and I am sure it will come across your desk quite soon if it has not done so already and a lot of what I say this morning is in there.

Strategic drivers

So we have launched our Development Plan. It is called 'A New Way of Learning' and what it sets out is the plan to animate and broker a UfI Learning Network. Before I tell you what that is, let me just step back a little bit and tell you what are the strategic drivers around the concept of the University for Industry. They are really quite high level drivers as well as getting very very close to local communities and to individuals because it is a strategy to deliver the better lives for people and the business competitiveness for the UK that I spoke about before. So there are the usual things that I am sure you will have heard about; the scenario of global competition and moves towards a knowledge economy, particularly for the UK. Also, changes in employment patterns which are not just specific to the UK but really effect global markets and are affecting us globally. And we need to look at what that means for people's lives and their own patterns of employment throughout their lives and what they need to do to progress and to prosper. Also, the move towards particularly high added value industries which call for not just higher level skills but constantly updated skills and knowledge so that people have to go on learning throughout their lives to get the knowledge and skills they need to get a job or to get a better job. And also, of course, the driver of social inclusion. As I have said, all of those things come together; they are not different or compartmentalised. So, those are the drivers. That is the task, the problem.

Ufl's strategic aims

Ufl's strategic aims, then, are to enhance employability for individuals and competitiveness for businesses by promoting lifelong learning. That is, by promoting the demand, engaging with people, reaching new learners, reaching small businesses, but also by brokering access to learning opportunities that can meet the skill needs of individuals and businesses, particularly in certain priority areas which I shall come on to. We are particularly charged with encouraging new learners and small businesses. In a sense Ufl has the hardest targets of all. We are trying to reach the people that we know you are trying to reach and are succeeding in reaching, and yet there are more, there are more people who are not engaging in learning, who do not have the opportunity, who find it too difficult, who do not find it right for them and so we have those hardest targets of all. But also, we have another strategic aim which is to try to promote access and innovation through fostering the use of information and communication technologies in learning as well. So that driver of innovation, of learning innovation in the pedagogic as well as technological sense, is important to us as well as the marketing and outreach driver of reaching new learners. All of those things come and meld together.

Policy context

I mentioned that there is a broad policy context and broad policy themes and the University for Industry sits alongside other policies. So, of course, we are part of the Learning Age programme and also things like the National Grid for Learning. The whole array must be complementary and certainly ministers have frequently given the assurance that all of the initiatives will be seen as complementary and there will be joined-up thinking and joined-up government. So Ufl aims to complement all of those initiatives and work with them and more. Just to give you a better idea of the relevance of some of those; the New Opportunities Fund, funded through the Lottery, for example, will be promoting digital content creation in libraries, training of librarians in use of IT and also is interested in learning places in libraries, so there is a clear connection there. Individual learning accounts, which are just now starting to be implemented, clearly could be a very important enabler for individuals to engage in lifelong learning. Many people - the Skills Taskforce, Regional Development Agencies and so on - are shaping the skills agendas and Ufl will complement those, both the national approach - the Skills Taskforce - and the regional skills strategies which will be put in place by the RDAs. Looking at the overall framework we clearly have a part to play in contributing to the National Learning Targets and of course we now have a new Learning Target about adult participation in learning which is particularly relevant to us. The Chairman, Ron Dearing, told the Secretary of State in public last week that he has nowhere to come to if the 500,000 additional new learners by 2002 were to be met or if there were problems in that, because the Ufl clearly is a complementary initiative. And of course looking in a sense back a little bit we are already seeing the results of the EU Adapt third call and Objective 4 being put into place with projects around the country as well as earlier initiatives like the IT Centres of Excellence and the Skills Challenge. So there is a very rich policy context in which Ufl sets out its strategic aims and its plan.

What will Ufl be?

So now, what will Ufl be? It is quite hard to communicate this so I would like feedback at the end as to whether it has come across. What we are going to be is a distributed open and distance-learning network across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. That is rather a mouthful and needs unpacking. There will also be a separate Ufl in Scotland with whom we hope to have a good working relationship. So Ufl will be a learning network which operates entirely through partnerships. It will not be a traditional educational institution or provider; we will not have our own students or staff or our own campus. We will instead broker relationships and operate through providers across the network. It will be a network which will put individuals and businesses in touch with the skills they need. That is, in touch, as you will see, both in the sense of information and advice and also access to real learning opportunities. It is quite hard to describe because I am now faced with the choice of whether to describe it from the perspective of the Ufl organisation, from the perspective of yourselves, as we hope partners and providers, or from the perspective of the users and customers. I shall try to do a bit of all of those.

Ufl's customers

So first let me turn to Ufl's customers. As I said, we are aiming to put businesses and individuals in touch with the skills they need. Ufl can aim at all adults. It is about lifelong learning which has something to offer for all adults and for both individuals and businesses. However, we are focussing on a particular set of skill sectors and business sectors as our first priorities. And I should emphasise that Ufl is about skills at all levels, from basic skills right through to post-graduate and Continuing Professional Development. We will be focussing on basic skills for those millions of adults who still do not have the basic literacy and numeracy skills that they need to get a good job and that the country needs for growth and competitiveness. It is a very important task and also one of our hardest to work with others towards that very important objective stated in the Moser Report, published last week. We are working closely with the Basic Skills Agency. ICT skills form a very high-demand area and they are very much needed. Employers currently do not seem to see that they have a problem with school-leavers in IT, but there are always new skills to be developed and, of course, across the whole workforce and all adults, the demand and need for IT skills is very great. We are also targeting IT as a sector, that is, as a sector as well as a skills sector. We are looking at business skills for those small businesses right across from personal development customer care through to advanced management skills. And we are looking at a number of sectors; the retail and distribution sector - a large sector of about three million people in the UK, but one with a good many skills gaps that need to be filled. Also, automotive, multimedia and environment. Multimedia is a small and emerging industry, automotive is a very challenging industrial base with strong needs, for example, in supply chain development. Those are our first priorities but we will be working quite quickly with others, consulting, to see what we might do next, but the customers will be in those areas.

Ufl's partners

Turning to the partners of Ufl. Further and Higher Education will be absolutely central to the partnership approach of the distributed learning network and I will say how that will work later on. Business employers, Trade Unions, and many other business organisations in a variety of ways, because this describes a variety of relationships, not a single partnership model. Some of the partners will engage with us as suppliers of UfI learning materials or services, some as delivery partners who will actually animate the network themselves and some as more strategic alliances with whom we will work to identify the priorities and agenda of UfI, for example, the RDAs in relation to the skills agenda and how we can help the RDAs to deliver their own objectives. And others like IT providers, publishers and broadcasters can have an array of relationships with us. We see broadcasting as a very important element in reaching new learners. We also see business intermediaries like Business Link, TECs and so on as important in engaging perhaps more directly with businesses. So all of those have a role to play. Broadly speaking, we can see that there will be partnerships and networks across the private, public and voluntary sectors, and, importantly, including the voluntary sector, which UfI will work with to establish and animate the entire learning network.

Putting the learner first

The approach we are taking in this partnership endeavour is very much to put the learner first. I know that we all try to do that but we should always keep on trying to put the learner first because the risk is that, however hard we try, we can become provider-led not learner-led. So UfI will aim to put the learner first. And because of that we have addressed certain questions in setting out our development plan. We have done a good deal of market research, on several occasions in a variety of particular contexts, to establish who our customers might be and whether people want to learn and what they want to learn and how we might engage with them. We also need to know what the barriers are and what the challenges are for us. Many of those are set out in the development plan which I hope you will look at later on. When we asked people we found that the barriers for learning were a very familiar story and one which I am sure that most people in this room have heard many, many times before. We found that 8 out of 10 of the people we surveyed would be willing or were keen to take part in lifelong learning: they thought it was a good idea. But fewer than 4 out of 10 of the people we asked had engaged in vocational training in the last three years. So there is a good way to go. And when we asked, 'Why not? What was difficult about that?', we got answers that you will recognise: 'there isn't enough information',' I can't find out what there is', 'the courses are at the wrong time', 'they are in the wrong place', 'they just don't seem right for me and they cost too much', and so on. And, almost most importantly of all, over and above that, the confidence factor and a sense even of fear: 'I'll fail', 'people will laugh at me', 'I'll be judged', 'I can't ring up because at the other end of the line people will think I'm rubbish if I haven't got this or that qualification'. Those are the barriers that we have to overcome and work with. We know there are many challenges; some of those challenges are relatively easy - flexible delivery, for example. I know it is a challenge but nevertheless you can get at it. On IT by the way, you might be interested to know that we were rather encouraged to find out that though there are many people who find the prospect of using a computer very daunting, nevertheless of the people we asked, almost 9 out of 10 were willing at least to consider using a computer for their learning and we think that is very encouraging. But in a sense the hardest challenges for us are the motivational ones and making sure that lifelong learning really is relevant and personal and has a place in your personal development and your lifelong learning portfolio. There are an enormous number of challenges that we have to face as we put the learner first.

The Ufl Pledge to Learners

We have tried to start from learning principles. A learning advisory group developed learning principles and we have consulted on those widely and taken on board the kind of comments that we have received. And those learning principles and the brand values of Ufl are all about overcoming those barriers. They are about access and flexibility, relevance, quality, innovation and cost effectiveness. The learning principles and the brand values really come together in a promise to learners, the Ufl pledge to learners. This pledge is in our development plan and says that in everything we do we are guided by these learning principles, we promise. And our promise is things that you will recognise as are familiar to all of us who are trying to extend learning. They are a response to those barriers to learning about time, place, pace and about information and personal choice and about being able to take control of your learning, making it something that is active for you. We want to offer learning materials that are relevant and that actively involve people. And we know that they would like that because when we asked them that is what they said. And also to be able to monitor progress and achievement as they go without having to wait for a very long time to find out how they are doing. Also to give easy access to support because when we asked people they said that while they were willing to learn with IT, they wanted learner support, and that will be in the model. And they very much wanted to be able to talk to other learners, a very important part of the overall engagement and motivation. And finally, we promise to give learners the chance to relate their learning to their own longer-term ambitions.

How will Ufl work?

So how will it work? There are a number of elements to it which I describe as a series of aspects: promotion and marketing to engage learners is very important, addressing the motivation and the fear and the confidence issues quite boldly and explicitly through marketing techniques. A comprehensive information service about all learning opportunities - lifelong learning - not just about Ufl-specific ones so aiming to help everybody and of course therefore to help providers in engaging new learners. And then a set of things which are specific to the Ufl Learning Network: specific learning materials and products and the network of Learning Centres for the delivery of those products, a model of learning service and support and membership in order to hold on to people and help them to progress with their lifelong learning, but also to keep them engaged and keep them informed. So those are the elements of the Learning Network and I shall just say briefly one or two things about each of those in turn.

Promotion and marketing

The first element is promotion and marketing and I have already alluded to the reasons why we need this and a very large part of the Ufl effort, of the Ufl organisation itself, will be in promotion and marketing. We will use promotional campaigns and broadcasting to reach individual learners as well as working with business intermediaries in relation to the business markets that we have. And we will include membership services. I have not yet talked very much about the brand. We will establish and develop a customer brand and we are working with an agency to identify that and will hope to be able to unveil it in a little while, perhaps around the summer. But the purpose of that is to identify Ufl as something which is distinctive and familiar, which engages people, attracts their attention and also is recognisable in what it stands for and what it offers. So the brand, we hope, will permeate everything that Ufl stands for and everything it does and it will be derived from, and very close to, the learning principles and our promise to learners.

Comprehensive information on lifelong learning

The next element is comprehensive information. Ufl will take over and operate, through a contract with the Department for Education and Employment, the Learning Direct helpline which now exists and we will be taking that over very shortly and enhancing it and developing it over the next year or so as we move forward to operational launch of Ufl. We shall enhance it by adding a website so there will be website presence and access as well as a telephone helpline and a very much expanded database or client management system which will enable us to track learners. But importantly, it will continue to be a public service with impartial and comprehensive information and advice. Ministers certainly want to see that in place and, as I have said, the learners we asked want that too. So clearly it makes sense. And Ufl will operate that with call centres in England and connecting with Wales and Northern Ireland.

Ufl learning materials

The next ingredient is the learning materials. We are going to broker a set of branded learning materials which will be available throughout the Ufl Learning Network. It is very important to us that the role of broker is maintained, that we are brokering learning materials on behalf of the learners and the providers. And also, importantly, the businesses. And so we have already engaged in sector modelling of those priority sectors and talked with businesses and with the NTOs to establish what the gaps are and what the priorities are and we are trying to address gaps both in supply and in demand. What we aim to produce are stand-alone, complete, open and distance learning packages where the feedback and support is integrated as far as possible in the learning materials themselves. We are looking at a whole variety of media, from print to audio right through to CD-ROM or on-line delivery, because we know that they are useful and accessible to learners. But we will focus on an ITC emphasis and hope to assist the Network in moving towards IT-based information and delivery as quickly as we can and as quickly as community penetration and coverage allow. Importantly, we will look at 'bite-sized chunks' of learning; those small steps which can help people to re-engage with learning or which can be useful particularly for busy people in employment and businesses, such as owner-managers. These will be 'bite-sized chunks', but leading to credit or to qualifications because again, when we asked potential learners, that was what they wanted. They wanted to know not just how they were doing but what it could lead to, so that they have something to take with them. We are also working to develop routes for learner-managed work-based learning which we think would be something which both employers and individuals would like.

Now clearly there are many challenges in that list and we know that, in promoting these elements of 'bite-sized chunks' and credit and work-based learning, on behalf of learners and on behalf of businesses, we are, of course, having to work through the existing system. One of the roles of Ufl, as I see it, will be to broker development and progress and to be able to identify the needs and wants of learners and businesses and put those together with the ability and capability of providers and move forward, perhaps, assisting in the development of both policy and implementation, working with funding bodies, qualifications and awarding bodies and quality bodies. Clearly there is a great deal of work to do there.

Learning Centres

The next element is the delivery network of the Learning Centres. There will be a nationwide network of Ufl Learning Centres across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Learning Centres will be a point of access for Ufl learning products and services; not just information, but actual delivery. From the point of view of the Ufl organisation, we will, in animating that network of Learning Centres, contract with consortia who will themselves come together to create their network of Learning Centres. This achieves a local responsiveness which will help to meet needs and it is essentially a very very localised operation. But we will assist in providing the kind of national template and the learning materials and also the service standards which are consistent with our Learning Principles. The consortia, we hope, will be able to put together networks of Learning Centres over a whole variety of lifestyle and workstyle locations, not just traditional formal learning environments but those informal, non-traditional environments that we know learners want. They are keen to see Learning Centres in the high street, perhaps in the shopping mall, in libraries, in community centres, possibly even pubs, football stadia and churches - all of those points at which we can meet with people's lifestyles, not ask them to come to us for something different. We hope the consortia would therefore be right across areas of provision and will bring together Higher Education Institutions, Colleges, Business Links, libraries and Local Authorities. An important agency for us are the Lifelong Learning Partnerships which are being established between TECs and Local Authorities and Colleges. But there are many agencies that we hope will work together to create the consortia. We also envisage virtual learning centres which will perhaps be organised on a sector basis because some of the sectors we are addressing, such as automotive or environment or retail are relatively small, concentrated sectors and the kind of support for that learning might be better brokered on a virtual basis on a wider scale, possibly even up to national scale, rather than on a local basis. So there will be quite a flexible approach to that. But the aim of it all is that learners will be able to learn in a variety of ways. They will be able to learn at home if they have a workstation, in the workplace in workplace Learning Centres and in Ufl Learning Centres which are not in the workplace. So there are a whole variety of points of access and delivery for them.

Learning support

As I have said, learners are very keen to have support and we envisage that this will take a number of forms. We will combine a generalised induction and mentoring with a degree of advice specific to Ufl learning opportunities through the Learning Centres. But we will also provide more specialised support, increasingly provided already by many institutions and many networks, using techniques such as e-mail, video link and some face-to-face support, providing therefore for dialogue and chat with other learners. This will probably be organised through the Learning Centres.

Quality

I have not said a great deal yet about quality and I wanted to come back to that because UfI must stand for quality as well as innovation and we see quality as very high on our agenda, again deriving from the Learning Principles and from the Vision. We would hope that quality management and assurance will be in place throughout the UfI Learning Network. What that means is that UfI will seek to ensure the quality of service for learners throughout their contact with the UfI Learning Network. We will do that wherever possible, of course, by working through existing quality systems and not duplicating or re-inventing the wheel. There are a number of aspects of quality which I have already referred to - learning opportunities that can lead to credit or qualification, a specification for learning materials which follows from the Learning Principles, the kind of service standards and customer care as well as learning standards that we would hope Learning Centres would use. There will be an emphasis on staff development because in animating the Learning Network we will be able to work with others to assist the people who deliver learning opportunities towards appropriate standards of delivery including this rather innovative area of learning support. Also, although we are creating something which in many ways builds on the strengths already in our system and also mirrors some international developments, nevertheless we are innovating, it is new and it is important that we evaluate as we go. The DfE will insist that we do that, but also that we have a framework for educational research and development so that we can identify good practice and disseminate it and thereby add value to the entire lifelong learning community. Although we hope to work through existing quality systems wherever they are, I am sure that there will be gaps because this is innovative. And again, what UfI will do, having identified them, is to broker the ways in which those gaps might be addressed through further quality arrangements or enhancement. So that is the model which I hope is relatively clear.

Next steps for UfI

Now what are the next steps for UfI? I said we have just published our Development Plan which covers the next three years and essentially that covers setting up the Network that I have described. There has been a series of stages in development of the University for Industry. We now have the permanent Board in place, chaired by Lord Dearing, Ron Dearing, who, of course, is eminently qualified in every respect to carry forward this very exciting concept. The Vice-Chair is Tony Greener who is Chairman of the food and drinks multinational which brought together Guinness and Grand Met. The Board members are now in place and that new Board has just met. What we have to do over the next year or so is a great many things; establish the UfI organisation which is an independent company which will seek charitable status and will work through trading subsidiaries. We need to commission the learning products and in fact we are calling for qualified suppliers of learning materials now and there is information available on the web for that (www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/ufi) and we are hoping that people from a variety of sectors will come forward with very innovative and creative approaches to learning materials. Clearly educational providers are in a position to do this but so are software producers, publishers, even broadcasters perhaps and that piece of work is underway.

The next thing we will do is to start to establish the network of Learning Centres and we hope to put our first call out for that in early summer and the aim of that will be to contract with consortia of people who will come together to operate their Learning Centres for their students (they are not ours) through the hubs. We are commissioning the IT systems, of course, which will be necessary to underpin all of that. I should have said that, as far as learning is concerned, the aim is to be internet-based and we will aim to have some on-line delivery (we are looking at the moment at how much on-line delivery might be possible at the outset), moving towards elements such as on-line registration and on-line assessment as quickly as all of the factors will permit. Another piece of work which we are doing is the work with the development projects and pilots, working with Ecotech and with the Department to establish clusters of Adapt projects so that we can share our ideas with them and learn with them as they go forward with their projects. We are doing this in parallel with establishing the Ufl Learning Network itself. We are now setting up the Ufl HQ which will be based in Sheffield and recruiting staff. We will have around 150 people based in Sheffield and around 50 or so probably in Support Offices in the English regions and Wales and Northern Ireland and the role of those offices will be to work with the consortia of Learning Centres in all of the areas of quality support, including the contracts and contract compliance, but also in areas of marketing and promotion, connecting with Regional Development Agencies and so on. And the aim is to be operational in the autumn of 2000. So there is an enormous amount to do to get all of that up and running in that timescale.

Ufl aims and Higher Education

Briefly, to finish, having set that out, what does it all mean for Higher Education? I have said that Ufl is a broker, a facilitator, an animator. Some people have also called it the creative distributor of learning opportunities. How can we connect with HE? Looking at the agenda of HE, high up that agenda is increasing access and widening participation, in our terms 'growing the market' and in your terms 'extending participation' quite substantially over the years to come. The model of Ufl is one which aims to grow the market, to engage with learners and to facilitate their access to learning opportunities. HE is being urged more and more to collaborate locally and regionally, including local learning partnerships, and again we hope that Ufl will be able to support HE and HEIs in that very important task. Improving links with business sectors and with small businesses - there is excellent work going on and, as we have heard, HEFCE is now putting a high priority on links with business and the community as the third arm of the endeavour of HE. There is a good synergy there, I am sure. On ICT and distance learning - until very recently HEIs were the best positioned of the nationwide sets of institutions to promote IT and distance learning and to establish partnerships with their access to JANET and superJANET and so on, but in recent years, FE is increasingly networked and in many communities and cities those networks now extend across many providers. But HE is very importantly positioned for that and with tremendous strengths in distance learning in a variety of media. Of course, in the OU, we have the world-class distance learning university, but more recently other institutions are developing and delivering distance learning in a variety of media to a variety of sets of customers. There is also the overall agenda of lifelong learning and Continuing Professional Development, which is crucial to what we are talking about today. And also the contribution to regional economic development and the skills agenda. So, right across an array of policy themes, whether it is for social inclusion or for business competitiveness, there seem to be points of synergy and contact between UfI and the higher education sector.

Higher education and UfI

So how can higher education get involved? There are very specific ways which you can see from the model, such as participating in the information database of Learning Direct which is a public service and a route to information and advice about *all* learning opportunities for adult learners, not just for UfI -specific ones. Universities and others can also respond to the call for qualified suppliers and collaborate in consortia (of course many people already have their partnerships and networks and consortia). Very important from your point of view and from ours, is the fact that the learning opportunities for UfI will flow through the funding systems that obtain - FEFC, HEFCE and other new funding regimes as those come into place, including, we would hope, individual learning accounts. But importantly, from the perspective of higher education institutions just now, because of the emphasis on expansion and growth and additional student numbers, we would be talking about funded learning units, helping you to access more people and to grow your market, not substitution. And finally, higher education can of course liaise in that nexus of strategic discussion as well as market information with Regional Development Agencies and the UfI offices in the region. So plenty of room for collaboration and synergy there. So there are many ways in which higher education, we hope, will be a central platform for the development and delivery of this flagship initiative. It is very much about mainstreaming vocational lifelong learning and I hope that you will see it as very pertinent to your own aims and concerns. Clearly we need to work with people, we have to build on strengths, take forward and innovate but primarily connect with the expertise and experience that people have.

University for Industry

So just to conclude then, Universities for Industry concept, which UfI is taking forward, is about businesses and individuals, all adults right across the UK. It is aiming to address needs for social inclusion as well as for prosperity and quality of life. It is really about making learning part of everyday life for everyone, for individuals and companies. People say how will we know we have succeeded? Well we have some very ambitious targets, which you will see in the Development Plan, for two and a half million people to benefit from the information through UfI and up to a million people accessing learning opportunities through UfI and a very high proportion of those using UfI-specific learning products and services. Those are the sort of quantitative measures, but qualitatively we are looking ahead to learning being genuinely part of everyone's lives, not just an aspiration, but a reality for people day by day in their lives and in their companies. So we are genuinely helping people to build better lives for themselves and working towards a lifelong learning society where the skills you need are only a thought away from wherever you are right across the community. And I always think that although it is a distributed distance-learning network, the University for Industry is actually about immediacy and closeness, aiming to be as close as possible to people's lives.

The Challenge of Inclusion to Higher Education Institutions

Professor Roderick Floud

Provost of London Guildhall University and Vice-chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals

Firstly, thank you very much for inviting me to this conference and particularly thanks to Graeme Davies who I think stimulated the invitation. I do feel very much at home in looking at your programme and I am very sorry that I have to be back in London for another academic engagement this afternoon so that I cannot stay with you. But I think that continuing education, lifelong learning to put it in another phrase is of extreme importance to the British university system and has been for many years though perhaps not sufficiently recognised and will continue to be so. So I am very happy to be here to participate in your discussions.

Let me begin with a map. It is a map of the buildings of London Guildhall University. But those of you who know London, and here I am speaking I suppose as an economic historian, will recognise that it is at the same time a map of one of the oldest urban settlements in Britain and also an exemplar of the problem of social and economic exclusion. Three floors below my office lies a piece of the Roman wall of London which is an interesting historical survival and I suppose we can probably claim to be the oldest university in Britain as a result of this piece of masonry. But, even more important, is the continuing division which flows down this boundary between the ancient city of London and what was then, and has been resumed as, Tower Hamlets. This is a division and has been ever since Roman times, a division between those who are included and those who are excluded. To the west lies the City of London, for hundreds of years one of the richest parts of the world. To the east, lies the Tower Hamlets, an area through which have passed successive waves of migrants, gradually surmounting poverty and despair at leaving their homelands.

This is the campus of the university, it is a campus which, unlike the one we are in today, contains not a single blade of grass on any of the university buildings, but we do claim it as our campus and it is an extremely exciting historical place to be. The area around here -Aldgate East, Whitechapel - is the land first of the Huguenot silk weavers in the seventeenth century, then a further wave of Jewish migration of the later part of the nineteenth century, into, and now almost entirely out of, this area, and it is now the largest Bangladeshi community outside Bangladesh. The streets where Jack the Ripper stalked his victims, round Spitalfields and Brick Lane, are now renamed 'Banglatown'. And meanwhile, new waves of migrants - Somali and many others - are now moving in. We have many asylum seekers in this area. Throughout this period, and still, it is one of the poorest areas in Britain. It is one of the fifteen poorest local authority areas in Britain and indeed in Europe. And you have a swathe of deprivation which comes across and north, up the Lee valley through East and Northeast London, which is an Objective 2 area of the European Community in recognition of its deprivation.

So as I walk, almost every day, from Jewry Street in the City of London, to the buildings of the university in this area, I am crossing a boundary of deprivation. The challenge of inclusion, in a sense, is one that visibly confronts me and my university every day. In practical terms, it is the challenge of finding ways by which the able people, young and old, who live to the east of the university can be helped to take part to the best of their abilities in the society to the west of the university. That is not just in the City of London, although in many respects unfortunately the City of London is the hardest nut to crack, but it is in the whole society and economy of the rest of prosperous Britain.

So I want to do three things in this address, based on this experience. The first is to describe a successful example of meeting this challenge in the shape of the Bangladeshi Education Advice Centre at my university, as an exemplar on a micro level of what can be done. Then I want to talk about the record and prospects for universities in responding to social exclusion in one particular area of the provision for mature students. And thirdly, I want to consider even more globally the role of the universities as agents for social inclusion in society as a whole. So I want to look at essentially micro, medium and macro issues.

A preliminary remark though is that I think that what universities have to do is to play to their strengths. In the terminology with which economists obfuscate their subject, we need to pursue our comparative advantage: we have to be clear what we can do well and we have to do well the things that we can do. I say this because I think there is at the moment some danger that universities are being asked to do more than they can do. This government is very keen, and we all welcome it, on partnership and on mobilising all our forces to combat social inclusion and to promote economic development and it sees universities and colleges, I believe correctly, as important members of these partnerships. So, even in the last three months, universities and colleges have been told that they are central to the government's plans for enhancing competitiveness and for creating a knowledge-driven society. They have been enlisted in the University for Industry. After some initial confusion, the universities have been drawn into the creation of Lifelong Learning Partnerships which will organise in some sense post-16 education across the country. At regional level, the universities have been accorded an important place in the new Regional Development Agencies. They are helping to draw up regional skills strategies and regional innovation and knowledge transfer strategies. I am talking about England in this respect, but in Scotland and Wales there are similar developments, sometimes in advance of this. Now this is all a very welcome change, at least to me. For the previous eighteen years the rhetoric had been that universities were a drain on the public purse, a haunt of peculiar, badly dressed people who asked awkward questions and called inconveniently for evidence. Oddly, this rhetoric went side by side with expecting us to cope with a very rapid expansion of student numbers as well as with calls for greater and greater efficiency. So there were mixed messages coming and I think it is very good that we now have at least a single message which gives us a great opportunity which I am sure we should we grab. But I do believe also that we have to be discriminating, and we do need to know what we can offer and what we can do well. If we get this wrong we can overstrain ourselves, divert ourselves from what we do best and ultimately fail to deliver. And I think that nothing could be worse than to raise in the public, perception expectations of what universities and colleges can do and then to see those hopes dashed. So what I want to concentrate on is three things that I think we can do well.

And let me begin, as I said I would, at the local level, with work on the ground. How has London Guildhall University achieved its position as fifth in the recent *THES* table of success in promoting access to students from disadvantaged backgrounds? Within a mile of London Guildhall's buildings live thirty thousand Bangladeshis. They, and other ethnic minority communities, have an age-structure and demographic pattern which means that Tower Hamlets is not only one of the most deprived educational areas of Great Britain, but also has the fastest growing school population in the UK. But the adult population, particularly the Bangladeshi adult population, but also the white working class of the East End, has had little or no exposure to post-school education and, until recently, hardly any children went on to college or university. In 1979, there were only two Bangladeshi students at the then city of London Polytechnic. And even ten years ago - the late eighties - fewer than ten children from Tower Hamlets entered higher education each year. Now, there are hundreds and there are over three hundred Bangladeshi students in the first year entry at London Guildhall and many others attending other universities. Many are mature students, coming through access courses and other forms of lifelong learning provision and many, of course, are eighteen-year-olds who have come through the Tower Hamlets school and further education system.

How have we produced this change? I think the answer is, 'painstakingly and in partnership'. The essential partnership is that with the Bangladeshi community itself. That is made possible by the fact that we have two members of staff out of three in our Bangladeshi Education Advice Centre who are themselves from that community. The staff members reassure families that the university will respect their cultural traditions. This is particularly important in encouraging parents of girls who may be very wary still of letting them go into culturally unsafe environments. The partnership works by making contact both directly with the community and with the schools and FE Colleges in Tower Hamlets which have predominantly Bangladeshi children and adults. We give advice in higher education in general, not just at London Guildhall University, and also on how to prepare for university entrance. That means that we can refer students - adults and younger people - to the FE Colleges, to Tower Hamlets and Hackney, for example, which we work closely with, for them to follow the kinds of courses that will lead to university entrance. Bangladeshi students from the university go out into the schools to answer questions and to provide role models. I would stress that we do not have, in any sense, quotas for admission. All local applicants from the five neighbouring boroughs are given special consideration by the university. The papers of every local applicant are first seen by the admissions tutor for the specific subject. If they are turned down, which obviously we hope they will not be, then they are invited to interview and at that interview our staff, both from the Bangladeshi Centre and other staff, can discuss with them their prospects and methods of getting in to university, either with us or possibly with others. So we give all local applicants special consideration, but not special consideration to any particular ethnic group.

The work of the unit extends beyond issues of university admissions, and I think this is very important: it has to be a system of continuing care. It provides a continuing support service for students at the university, it acts as a buffer zone, smoothing over misunderstandings with the community. The unit is used to getting telephone calls in the evenings to enquire why a female student has not got home. It explains to families, and this is perhaps particularly important, why we have to treat the students as adults. The Bangladeshi community are very concerned to see their young people in particular, improve; they are very anxious for upward social mobility and that means that they in a sense want to have a closer involvement with their children and their children's progress than is sometimes compatible with the Data Protection Act and the fact that their children are, of course, actually adults. So we have to explain to anxious fathers why we cannot tell them the marks that their students have received for their essays and papers.

We also are now increasingly working with another local initiative, led by the university, called 'Qualified for Employment' which tries to bridge cultural and other divides between our graduates and other graduates in the community and employers. This is vital work and I think is going to need a great deal more work in the future. London Guildhall and other universities have helped many students from Tower Hamlets and Hackney to graduate, but those two areas - Tower Hamlets and Hackney - are not only educationally deprived at the school level and in terms of university entrance, but they now have among the highest rates of graduate unemployment in the country. So getting people into university is merely the first step, getting them through whatever barriers exist into employment is the next task. We must not raise and then disappoint ambition. We are trying to understand, through the project, why graduate unemployment is so high and to work out what remedial action can be taken.

So BEAC's strength, I think, lies in the breadth of its approach; it has achieved not simply an academic or educational partnership with the local community, but one that takes in cultural, generational, familial and economic factors. It has taken a long time, it has been going for fifteen years, it predated my move to the University, but it has been one of the things which I have tried to encourage. It has taken a long time and it is not cheap. It has been worth it but it has not been easy and it contains a lesson I think for those who believe, and I am afraid that the government sometimes seems to believe this, that widening participation can be the subject of a quick fix. It is delightful that HEFCE is giving incentives to universities with particular geo-demographic profiles, but I think that it will take a long time, in my experience, for this to work.

So BEAC is a microcosm, an intensive effort to meet the challenges of one especially deprived community and, to revert to what I said at the beginning, I think this is something that universities must do and which we can be good at. It is through efforts such as this and by the motivation and aspirations of the young people themselves, that almost all ethnic minorities are now over-represented in higher education and that the problem of raising aspirations is now largely centred on Afro-Caribbean males and on the white working class and I shall come back to this latter problem later on but first I want to move to my second level of university activity in combating exclusion.

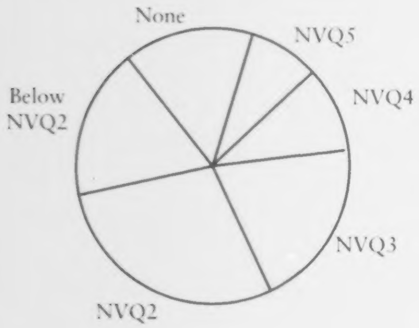
This is to consider what is in a real sense a problem of history. It is the problem of how we can continue to raise the levels of educational attainment among older age- groups. This is from the Labour Force survey *[fig.1]*. It is a table, as you can see, of the highest qualification held by people of working age. And you can see that either through this table or through these separate pie charts for males and females *[figs. 2 and 3]*, that there are still significant numbers of people in our population who hold no educational qualifications whatsoever. It is clearly a disgrace that fifteen per cent of males of working age and twenty-one per cent of females have no qualification or evidence of educational attainment at all. Now this is something which last week the Moser committee drew attention to in trying to improve literacy and numeracy standards and it is a societal problem. However, I do not actually believe that it is for universities to do this. This is work which we should encourage but it is not our comparative advantage.

Qualifications by gender

Highest qualification held by people of working age (1998)

	NVQ5	NVQ4	NVQ3	NVQ2	Below NVQ2	None
Males	4	18	22	22	18	15
Females	3	18	12	22	25	21

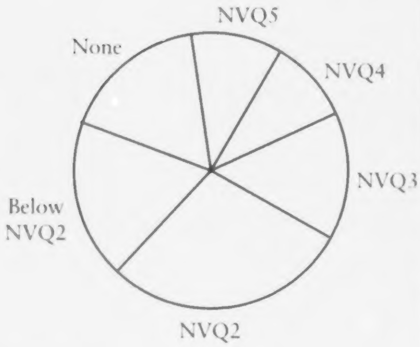
Figure 1



Highest qualification held (Males 1998)

Figure 2

Source : Labour Force Survey



Highest qualification held (Females 1998)

Figure 3

What we can and should do, I think, is to tackle the problem in a sense in the middle; that is, the problem of raising the aspirations and therefore the qualifications of the people with NVQ Level 3, and possibly some of those with NVQ Level 2, so that they can aspire to take part in the NVQ Levels 4 and 5 group. I think if one is going to start to think about how to do that the first thing to do is to admit that as a society we have long undervalued the talents of millions of our fellow citizens. This is particularly obvious if one looks at the development of qualification by age group. In 1998, among men and women aged twenty to twenty-four, as you can see from this table *[fig.4]*, fifty per cent had qualifications at NVQ Level 3 or above. But among the older age group at the other end of the age spectrum, among those aged sixty to sixty-four, only thirty-nine per cent have those qualifications. Now how do we interpret those numbers?The first is that twenty-year-olds today are much cleverer than sixty-year-olds ever were. As someone rapidly approaching the age of sixty I do not find this explanation either attractive or likely. So let us reject that one out of hand. The second interpretation is that of the horrid term 'dumbing down'; it is that the overall level and distribution of intelligence has not changed but that it is much easier today than it was forty years ago to achieve a particular level of qualification. Now this of course is a hotly disputed topic. I think it is unlikely and numerous studies have failed to reveal any evidence for it. Indeed there is plenty of evidence, I believe, that actually educational standards have been rising rather than falling. I would commend to you, if you doubt that, to go back to the interesting article in the *Education Guardian* a few months ago in which a secondary school teacher reported her experiences of administering the National Curriculum fourteen-year-olds mathematics tests to a group of employers on a common purpose course. And you should go back and look at it and try and do it yourself. I did. I sent it to all my heads of department with the encouragement of 'try and do it' and I have not had any responses yet - no, that is not true, one of them has. I managed to get thirteen out of the seventeen right with very considerable effort and I did quite a lot of maths when I was at school and university. I do not believe that the bulk of people of my age or indeed of people of thirty, probably forty plus, have that level of mathematical attainment which is now required of fourteen year-olds. So I do not believe in the 'dumbing down' hypothesis.

Qualifications by age

Highest qualification held by people of working age (1998)

Age Group	NVQ5	NVQ4	NVQ3	NVQ2	Below NVQ2	None
16 - 19		1	16	39	23	21
20 - 24	1	18	31	22	20	8
25 - 29	4	23	17	21	26	10
30 - 39	4	21	17	21	25	12
40 - 49	5	20	17	20	19	20
50 - 59	3	16	15	19	17	30
60 - 64	3	15	21	21	10	30

Figure 4

Source : Labour Force Survey

The third explanation of these figures, which I would favour, is that the sixty year-olds of today (and the fifty and forty year-olds) were perfectly capable when they were twenty of achieving the equivalent then of NVQ Level 3 or above, but society was not organised to let them do it. In other words, we wasted them. It is logically likely that this was so, but like all social scientists, I also check my logic against experience. I remember experiencing an acute sense of loss and of the unfairness of society when, in the late 1950s at a highly selective grammar school, several of my friends were forced to leave school at the age of sixteen after their 'O'Levels to get jobs; they are the people who did not achieve in these qualification terms at that time and this was a waste of them and many others. They were the embodiment of these labour force statistics which are still haunting us. But I think the problem is not confined to the fifty and sixty year-olds; until quite recently, until indeed the expansion of the British university system over the past ten years, we were still excluding people who could and should have gained higher qualifications than they actually did.

Why this was so could be the subject of the whole talk but to me it stems in part from two sets of attitudes which have by no means disappeared unfortunately in higher education. The first is summed up in the phrase, 'If at first you don't succeed, don't bother'. It is the attitude that unless you achieve at the expected age - eighteen to twenty-one - then you must be worthless. The second attitude is that shown by what I always think of as the 'gatekeeper tendency' within the teaching profession and you can see it at all levels. It is the attitude which sees our job as determining who should fail rather than helping people to succeed. I do believe that we have to change our view of our role in both these respects if we are to promote inclusion rather than to promote exclusion. I do believe that the attitude to mature study is changing and I am sure that that is helped by many of you in this room but I think there is still a long way to go.

These figures are all in terms of proportions but what does this mean in terms of absolute numbers? These next figures *[fig.5]* are best to be seen in rather round terms because they are essentially estimates, but what I have tried to do here is to look at the number of people with NVQ 3 qualifications, particularly problematical in the youngest age group actually who do not have higher qualifications, since a very high proportion of these are probably, in the terms that I

The wastage of the past : potential mature students

Aged 20 - 29 and with NVQ 3 qualifications	c1,250,400
Aged 30 - 39 and with NVQ 3 qualifications	1,565,000
Aged 40 - 49 and with NVQ 3 qualifications	1,311,380
TOTAL	4,126,780

Figure 5

Source : Labour Force Survey 1998

have described, potential mature students for the university system. And I think what this table shows is that there are an awful lot of them. An argument is still raging about the effects of the introduction of fees and loans last year in the university system and unfortunately in my view that has led the government and the Department for Education to emphasise the declining potential number of mature students. The argument is that not so many mature students applied to university this year because the size of the potential cohort is diminishing rather than what would be an inconvenient conclusion from the government's point of view, that fees and loans are putting them off. Well maybe the number of potential mature students is diminishing; as you can see, it is certainly true that there are fewer of them in the twenty to twenty-nine year-old cohort than in the thirty to thirty-nine cohort, but there are still an awful lot of them out there. Even if of course logically the pool must be shrinking because we are bringing more and more people in at the age of eighteen to twenty-one.

Moreover, in a sense this very significantly understates the potential demand for mature study because trends in the labour market suggest that not very far in the future a first degree will not be enough. In other words, I am aiming here at essentially bringing people from NVQ Level 3 to NVQ Level 4, but trends in the labour market suggest that the next challenge, if you like, will be to bring people from NVQ Level 4 to NVQ Level 5, and there one is talking about a very large number of potential students indeed. So I would come to the conclusion, and I am not sure whether it an optimistic or a pessimistic one, that the market for re-equipping mature students with extra qualifications will keep all of us going for further than I can see and it makes the target of an extra five hundred thousand students in higher education, which was greeted with great joy by the education profession when it was enunciated by Tony Blair, actually look rather puny. There is in fact a much bigger task than half a million. Now my argument again is that attracting and educating mature students is another piece of pursuing comparative advantage for universities. It is something that most, if not all, universities have shown that they are good at and we need to capitalise on the things that we do well. So let us press on with the mature student market.

Now let me turn to my third level of inclusion and the role of the universities. Both BEAC, in my university, and the whole range of catering for mature students are examples of the universities changing themselves to combat social and economic exclusion. But there is another way in which we can help. This is to use our specialised skills to help other agencies to fight exclusion. And this is the essence of the partnership approach which is so much in favour today. Universities throughout the country are engaged, I know, as a few have been for some time, in cementing and creating partnerships. But I thought I would show you, as an example, London Guildhall's current community partnerships. It is paradoxical of course that one reason why we can create and be involved in so many partnerships is actually because we are in an area of deprivation. And because that area is so deprived it receives significant European Union funding which we can use to enable ourselves with all our other partners to take part in these community regeneration activities. But I draw particular attention to a number of things which we are involved in. Beginning with the younger people: we housed last year and will house again this year Tower Hamlets Summer University which brings students from the Tower Hamlets and indeed a wider area of East London, from fourteen to eighteen years old, into a university environment just so that they are not so put off by it. And that is an important activity when you are trying to break down the barriers, particularly actually with the white working class of the East End who are simply not used to being in FE or HE institutions. We have got an involvement with the whole city-side regeneration company which funds regeneration activity in the area that I showed you on the map earlier on and we are building, and I cannot resist emphasising this, the new National Library of Women with the aid of four and a half million pounds from the National Heritage Lottery Fund which will provide not only a home for the great Fawcett libraries of Women's Studies and the Suffrage Movement but also a tourist attraction for this deprived area of East London. And then throughout the rest of the Lee valley area we are involved, as you can see, in a whole range of partnerships, consortia, one runs out of terms to describe them. And I think that this is an area where universities do have an important part to play.

But there are problems: first, what can be done to overcome the image, which I think is sunk deep in British public consciousness, that universities are not interested in their local communities, and second, what are the particular strengths which universities ought to be able to bring to these communities and to the new partnership activities? I think we have to realise that the image of lack of interest is a very strong one; I can recall numerous meetings at national and local level in which the idea that universities might want to help in their community was met with incredulity, sometimes with disparaging references to the 'university on the hill' looking down its nose at local industry and local government. It is not helped, I think, by the self-absorption which characterises the Research Assessment Exercise, nor by the constant reference to an international community of scholars and the need to promote scholarship across national boundaries. Of course we need to attain the highest international standards in teaching and research, but that does not preclude doing a good job locally. Many universities old and new were founded specifically to benefit their local communities and many still do so. But it is not a question of general benevolence, what we need again to do is to play to our strengths and not be modest about them.

What are the strengths? First, I think is an ability which is bred into academics to analyse a problem and to manipulate data and to tease out results from the evidence. This strength has led, for example, to a young member of my staff coming to play a pivotal role in a local Safety Partnership. Safety Partnerships are being set up throughout the country jointly by the police and local authorities and local business to analyse crime and disorder in the local community and to devise crime prevention strategies. The young criminologist in my university is working with that group to map crime and disorder in Tower Hamlets in order to provide the evidential basis for that Partnership. That seems to me to be exactly the role that the university can and should be playing. A second strength of universities, which we should play to, is paradoxically a result of the isolationism of the past. Universities are seen to be independent, able to hold the ring, not sullied by the need to make profits or political bias. Odd as it may seem to anyone versed in university politics, we are seen as somehow purer, displaying objectivity and thus ideal to chair disparate groups and to achieve consensus. And we have a number of examples where my senior colleagues have been playing that role of being engaged but also slightly detached.

Our size is another strength, which again we underplay. In many cities universities are now among the largest employers. By and large, we are good employers, concerned to ensure equal opportunities and to provide equal pay for equal value. We can at the very least ensure that we try to provide career opportunities for people from our local communities. And I have to say on this point that I am not very proud of the ethnic balance of my staff. I lead a university which has about fifty per cent of its students from the ethnic minorities but the number of staff from those communities is very much lower, but we are working on that. A fourth strength comes from our academic subjects. Any university contains experts on a myriad of subjects, both conceivable and inconceivable, and most of them love talking about their field. The problem for the outside world is to get hold of that knowledge and enthusiasm. Universities need, however, need to provide interpreters who can make their expertise accessible to the wider community. It is no good simply producing lists of research topics and expecting small business people or community leaders to interpret that academic jargon in a way that allows them to access it. In London, as part of the London Innovation and Knowledge Transfer Strategy which is going to be launched in a fortnight's time, we are going to try to build up a network of what we have called 'knowledge angels' on the model of the 'business angels' networks which have already been established. We want to use university and other staff to provide advice and support to local small businesses and community groups and we are seeking to provide, through information technology, translations of the research which academics are doing so that they can be useful to the community and to those who want to use them.

So what I have tried to do in this talk is to give three examples of where I think universities should be and can be involved in meeting the challenge of inclusion. Providing research expertise to small businesses - the one I ended with - may seem some way from inclusion, but in an area like Tower Hamlets and Hackney, it isn't. Small business is the major employer and unless we can engage with the small business community, part of it the ethnic minority business community, we are not going to be able to provide the jobs and the skills and the expertise which those communities desperately need. The first step which we have to take in combating social and economic exclusion is, I believe, to do as we did with the Bangladeshi Education Advice Centre; we have to embed ourselves in the community which is suffering from exclusion, we have to feel that we are part of that community, we have to be accepted as part of that community. We have to offer our help and gradually, gradually, very gradually, I believe it will be taken. So the challenge of inclusion, in other words, requires us first to include ourselves.

Lifelong Learning in the Mainstream - Issues of Access and Equity

Professor Sir Graeme John Davies
Principal and Vice-Chancellor University of Glasgow and Chairman of UACE

It is quite an interesting observation that for a setting which is so well presented the clock is in quite the wrong place for the speaker, so if I get my time out of line we can blame it on the design of the Wolfson Lecture Theatre, not on me. It is nice to be here in a sense as a believer, preaching to what I believe is an audience that is probably sympathetic to what I am saying. On the two occasions I spoke as Chief Executive of the Funding Council I was not quite sure that my message was likely to be received in the way that I might perhaps expect this to be received. And I find it unusual to be in the position of making the address at this time because in most conferences of this type you tend to have keynote addresses which are generic, which are followed in due course by keynote addresses which are more specific. But we have actually done it the reverse way round. In a sense there were generic elements in what Roderick Floud said this morning, but it was really very specific, and so I will be quite the reverse and I will be very generic.

As Chairman of UACE - a post I feel privileged to hold - I see my role, in so far as I have one, as being both a legitimiser of the aspirations of those in adult and continuing education and very much a champion of them, both in the public domain and sometimes behind the closed door. And I come to it also with the environmental experience of working latterly in an area where the needs of access and equity are clearly evident. Scotland, as you all know, is an area where we have to some extent cracked the participation barrier; the current Age Participation Index for Scottish students is 47% of those leaving school into higher education which is a long way ahead, of course, of what is happening in England. But, if I turn to my own city, one of the slightly frightening statistics of the city of Glasgow is that that figure is 21% and if I go into that city, into an area such as Govan the figure is nearer 5%. So although there is much that has been achieved in terms of access, there is still in Scotland as in England, this issue of the unevenness of the distribution.

Let us begin by reminding ourselves of what has gone on. There were references this morning to the changes in the profile. Huge changes have taken place since the late eighties: the numbers of students that are learners in higher education; the shift from elite to mass; the numbers of mature students inside the system; the marked increase in part-time involvement; the work that has genuinely gone on in identifying and building employer links of all sorts, not just those which are strongly vocational, and commitment to working on all of the ethnic minorities. A point that came up in one of the workshops this morning is that there are all sorts of ethnic minorities, including white ethnic minorities which exist in a variety of places. There is also the real question, one that you I believe would all know the answer to: is it really essential that there is a role for the HEIs in providing lifelong learning for all? Well, much of this starting point was spelled out, as a reminder to those who were not aware, by Dearing. Dearing picked up a number of interesting points and in the *Report* emphasised that we must add lifelong learning to the aims of higher education. The *Report* then went on to talk about the perceptions of where the commitments and the distributions lay. And when you look at that you begin to realise that there are very big differences between the types of institutions that you all represent and that there is a very marked difference in the performance of the post-1992 universities and the pre-1992 universities.

And so it is not surprising that there is this concept that Roderick Floud identified this morning, the image in parts of the sector of a genuine lack of interest. He emphasised, as all of us recognise, that there is a reluctance on the part of a number of the research-active universities (by this I mean those 28 institutions to whom 75% of QR goes) who sometimes see the Research Assessment Exercise as being of primary importance and everything else makes them take their eye of the ball. Others see the RAE as a sort of distortion or a distraction. My belief is that the two are not exclusive and one of the jobs we have is to keep convincing the research universities that although they are good at that, it does not mean that they should be good at that to the exclusion of the other social, cultural and community roles that they should be playing. It perhaps would have been unkind this morning to have asked Roderick Floud to have marked on his map of London, the other higher education institutions which surround his own and ask the question are they all able to talk about their community involvement in the same strong way that he was able to talk? So there is within all that, if we are going to add lifelong learning to the menu, the need to persuade the stakeholders to change.

And there is absolutely no doubt that in a great many institutions persuading the staff is a major difficulty. In many institutions persuading what is given a variety of descriptions, the more polite ones are probably 'the centre' or 'the management group', to embrace a commitment is very difficult. We were talking this morning in one of the workshops about staff participation and the cost of that. I will refer later to one of my pet themes that many of you know about - the 'Learning Works' programme in Glasgow. The cost of that is £100,000 in an employment budget of £100,000,000. In seeking ways to try and sell that, I thought through and pointed out that if any one employee is absent one day less through illness or anything else, than they would normally be, then the system more than pays for itself. And for anybody to say that a commitment to internalising lifelong learning is something that institutions cannot afford, is nonsense.

Well, let us go on a little further and ask the next question. If we look at the shifting and playing around with the boundaries of higher education, there are a number of identifiable reactions that come from different parts of our community. There is, as I have implied, a strong defence of the mainstream culture. There are different attitudes towards mainstreaming and perhaps it is unfortunate that I talk about lifelong learning as mainstream because what I mean is that it has to be an attitude of mind implanted throughout the whole of the institution at all levels. A confusion could occur because on another occasion I have talked about mainstreaming in quite a different context; about the way in which you might handle continuing education in order to ensure that it could continue to be funded. This is not what I am thinking about today. Today, I am thinking about cultural implantation.

There are those who say, as Roderick identified this morning, that there are problems with excellence and there are problems with standards and there are problems with quality and he used the word 'dumbing down'. Again, this to me is nonsense. If you look closely at much of what is going on then the bulk of the evidence supports exactly the point that Roderick Floud made this morning: that standards are in fact rising and not falling. There are problems about vocationality. But I find it odd to think that lifelong learning is identified in so many minds so unequivocally with vocationality. It is actually about alertness and education and developing the whole, and if I am developed as a whole person through other forms of activity, parallel to those which are my own discipline, then to argue that that is unimportant or peripheral or whatever, seems to me to be selling the pass. There is no doubt that our experiences with implanting non-vocational lifelong learning opportunities in the breadth of our support staff in Glasgow has actually changed attitudes very singularly. It has also had, as many of you will know from your own experience, a genuine impact on attitudes towards vocational studies, and so you win both ways.

The point was made that I am Chairman of the Universities' Superannuation Scheme. One of the things that never ceases to surprise me are the statistics about the longevity of academics. The actuarial assumptions we have to make about the period between retirement and death for most academics is mainly five, and in many cases nearly ten, years more than for the rest of the population. That is about education and alertness and interest and involvement and that evidence is irrefutable. It is the sort of evidence that goes with generally implanting a learning culture and a learning attitude within institutions. There are important reactions. We have to think about the changes that will take place around us, about the links with employers. There is a need in some areas for more vocationality, but this is not just for us, it is about supporting the community. That is an issue that I hope to return to.

We all recognise the necessary requirements of equity, the necessary requirements of social justice and the need to ensure that we include whereas previously we excluded. We did not often exclude deliberately or explicitly but, again as has been pointed out by Rod and I know has been the subject of much discussion in the workshops, we are whizzo at excluding by negligence or putting together implicit ways of doing that. There are other barriers, some of them are very explicit barriers to access. Again, some of these were talked about this morning, but let us just spell them out. There are the straight economic barriers. I do not believe that the definitions of how some of the so-called mechanisms will operate, the definitions of the use and access of learning banks, for example, have yet been sufficiently thought through to overcome all of those economic barriers. Certainly, for a great many people, as there are changes in the industrial landscape around our towns, then where there was a source of support for vocational training, that suddenly disappears as well as the employment. We all struggle in general terms with trying to make contacts with smaller firms and it is not at all surprising that existing development agencies and those which are growing and the TECs and the LECs and all of these others put increasing emphasis on bridges with the SMEs. It is not a very easy nut to crack, as I know many of you have felt.

There is also I think the general problem that was identified this morning of the economic impact of changing circumstances. Although we do not like to admit it, and we like to say that it is a blip in the nature of events, the cumulative evidence already of the impact of loans and fees on mature students cannot be ignored. There is the sort of feeling that perhaps it is not real and that anyway the government will do something about it if it is identified as being real, as Road said this morning. I cannot recall in my lifetime in higher education such an abrupt shift in the shape of the cohort. The build of the cohort changed in nature, but over quite a long period of time. But it is like many other things in higher education, such as research, it takes a long time to build a research base. I can undo my research base overnight and I think here we are facing the prospect of what has been a slow and genuinely valuable building of an involvement which seems to have been dismantled overnight even though it was expressly not the intention. But many of you in this room, who deal on a day-to-day basis with mature students know, more than I, the difficulties that they face. In my own university I have been able to persuade my colleagues and others to put in place a scholarship system for single parents, most of whom are female. What is it for? It is to do one thing. It is not to pay the loan because most of them fall outside, but it is to do things like pay travel fares. And so we have created a scholarship system to allow people to move around because we found that that is itself becoming a barrier.

As we go on we find there are these personal factors: finance is one I have alluded to, but there are a lot of others. There are changes in the welfare system, culture-shock problems, issues of aspiration and the way we work on them, and so on and so on - all part of the vocabulary which should be firmly implanted in all of your minds. There are also the institutional factors. In some cases we overcome them, in other cases we do not. I liked Rod's expression this morning - the 'gatekeeper tendency'. There are certainly a lot of our colleagues who find difficulty with all sorts of non-traditional students - they do not have to be lifelong learners, they do not have to be mature, they do not have to be from ethnic minorities, they can just be different. They find them a nuisance, and they find them an irritant. And it is not that it distracts them from what they think might be their primary purpose, it is that it makes them face questions and issues that they prefer not to face. Again I know that a number of the workshops have sought to grapple with that particular problem of the inconvenience of the concept of lifelong learning because it tends to make life just that little bit more uncomfortable than it was.

We have, across the system, devoted a deplorably small proportion of our budget to support systems. Not just the obvious support systems of counselling services to deal with extremes, but the sort of support systems that help people to deal with the small day-to-day difficulties, the unfamiliarities in the early parts of programmes that people confront. There is some work that we have been doing for many, many years in one of our very deprived areas (for those of you who know Glasgow, it is mainly concentrated on Castlemilk and Easterhouse), dealing with the problem of trying to bring in access students by running a comparatively large Summer School. The interesting thing about it is that it is not necessarily about the educational advantage that the individuals who come with us for those three, four, five, six weeks gain, it is about the familiarity with the system and the removal of aspects of the culture of the system as being threatening. For all of us, we live it, it is our bread and butter, we understand the universities, but they are actually frightening places. I can remember when I was first in Liverpool, you used to go in to the Senate House where the administration was and you walked through some big double doors, up some steps and there, 25 yards away across a slate floor, was the receptionist. You had to walk across these 25 yards with this girl sitting there looking at you and people would walk across and turn around and walk back out again. So we shifted the reception forward and, lo! and behold, the public began to talk to some of our people. We do not think of those things.

What is fascinating about the group we bring in the summer, is that they do learn the ropes in a genuine way. They know where the library is and they know how to work it, they know where the lecture rooms are, they know what timing is like, they know what it is like to sit in a lecture. It is demystified. What we had not expected, is that it gives them status within their cohort because the young, who are much more brash and confident and less threatened, actually do not know where the library is nor how to work half of these things. But suddenly amongst them, is a group of people who are demonstrably different in background and attitude and usually in age, who know about the system, and who become, almost by accident, quasi-mentors. This means that they have a role which identifies them with the institution in a very real way. I think these are things that we all must bear in mind when we think about support systems. There are the formal support systems but there are also other ways of creating gateways which can be extremely supportive.

So, what are the lessons that we should draw as we start to think about mainstreaming? This is mainstreaming of continuing education, mainstreaming of lifelong learning. As I said, it means the implantation of the culture. We have to live with responsiveness and we have to be flexible. There are lots of competing interests some of which I have alluded to. There are the problems of the mode of delivery. Again, you cannot, on a circumstance like this, discard some of the anecdotal experiences that you have. I can remember a wonderful one when I was in Liverpool. We brought in a good group of mature single parents. If you wanted to borrow books from the special collection in the library, i.e. set text books, you could only borrow them from four o'clock onwards. I had a delegation come to the Vice-Chancellor's office saying please could I do something about this. I sat there and asked the obvious question, 'what's the problem?' And they said, 'School? Children? We are gone by four o'clock and they won't let us borrow before then'. So we did the amazing thing, almost over the bodies of the library staff, of saying that these people could borrow books at half-past three or even three o'clock. And suddenly you find that what you have done is to create an opportunity which recognises the nature of the circumstance of the people in which you are trying to implant this experience.

We also have to look at a number of important elements. There are issues of the mode of delivery. There is no doubt that as there has been growth in part-time study, there has been a view, sometimes a view that comes in a slightly uninformed way from government, that information technology will solve all our problems, that distance education is the right word to use, and that's that. It is my view, and it is a view I do not hold alone (although I am sure there is a number of people who would contest it), that taking existing ways of delivering the educational message and just repackaging for a PC, is pointless. It is quite intriguing if you go into the Web;

there are a lot of websites, particularly browser sites you will pick up, which will switch you in to a little logo of the University of Phoenix. If you have not already done so, it is worth going in there and having a look at some of the stuff they have got. Let me just suffice to say, it is interesting, but I do not see it as being very educational and certainly, if it were my institution, I would be extremely uneasy about the nature of what is being delivered. I have a friend, a well-qualified friend, who decided as a sort of aside, to do one of those courses. His descriptions of his experiences are really quite something.

What other lessons might we draw when we start to think about mainstreaming? We have to think not just in terms of those forms of flexibility, but also others. Again, one of them was identified this morning, and I have already made a brief reference to it - responsiveness to our community. It is recognising that we have to think about the individual, we have to think about range and diversity and we must interact with our employers in one way or another. The point was made this morning about partnership. I think partnership is a very critical word. I take my hat off to activities such as Roderick Floud's example, activities which I know are not unique to Guildhall. But the example of the use of staff from the ethnic minority to demystify access for that ethnic minority is a role model that many of us should use, I think to great effect. So that is critical. And you can go on from there and ask the other questions about inclusiveness and equity. And those other questions about inclusiveness and equity of course relate to the overall issue of the social purpose of higher education. It seems to me that there is more to it than just 'bums on seats' and a feeling that I am improving the statistical profile of those who are being educated. It is about recognising that we are parts of communities and there are strong interdependencies.

Two very critical points I reaffirm, are that for most of our institutions, not all but most of our institutions, the large bulk of the delivery mechanisms for HE grew out of their community and we have to keep putting things back into those communities. The other very important point I would emphasise is that of neutrality, and perhaps Rod did not spend as much time on that as I might have welcomed. The great thing about higher education institutions is that, on the whole, in political terms, they are neutral. They are places where what are occasionally in our communities the warring factions, can get together without either or any of them feeling that they are surrendering their own sovereignty. It can be quite intriguing. You adopt different styles of doing things. I found that when I was in Liverpool, the positive nature of my interactions with Access groups in Liverpool 8 (you all know where that fits in the postcode analysis of exclusion) changed immediately when I realised, after the first meeting with a group from that community, that I had made one fundamental and absolute mistake. I wanted to talk to them about ways we could help and so I invited them in. From then on, I invited myself out and it changed the response such that they began to ask questions and approach ways of partnership in a much more constructive way. So I think this issue of community, and embracing and utilising and working with the community, is critical. And at the end of the day, it does change things. You get a different form of society.

Another wonderful Liverpool anecdote: when I went to Liverpool we were spending £100 a day replacing broken windows in the university. By a year after we had embraced the community and got involved with them, we had reduced it to £100 a week. It was still quite a lot of money, but it was a significant gain. And by the time I left, it was no longer an issue, it had disappeared. And I remember asking one of the leaders of the coloured community there, 'why?' I am always curious to understand why people's behaviour changes and he said to me something which I took as a great compliment and I still embrace as a great compliment, he said, 'you are no longer the enemy'. We had become inclusive and not exclusive and there are many many gains that come about in that sort of way.

Well if we pick up and learn our lessons, where do we go from there? We can go and ask ourselves what contributions we have to make in terms of achieving the learning society. There is the obvious one which, if we are not careful, the social inclusion argument might just displace. I did make the point that it is not all about vocationality. But, having said that, I do not think it would be right to let the pendulum swing back too far; there still is a necessity for there to be professional development and vocationality. We have to move into these forms of delivery that many of you have sidled towards and some of you have taken very big strides towards, but not everyone. I find it interesting and I get tempted on occasion to reinforce prejudices. So, if you ask yourself the question that if each of you were to be asked to write on a piece of paper and put in an envelope, three higher education institutions whom you do not believe have made many strides, I am sure it would be a very interesting statistical survey and I suspect that we would all end up having two of the three in common. Think on that. We do have to have our widening access programmes and we are being funded to do it and the Funding Councils are genuinely doing positive things in those directions. We have to be systematic and we have to recognise, as I said, that, although our engagement will be local, we have to think of it in national terms.

One of those popular words that again springs to the minds of our political leaders from time to time is 'globalisation' and the international role that we play. I cannot deny that that is important to a nation such as our own who depends for a lot of our economic strength on our international role and the way in which we transmit information. There is, as you all know, a drive that is now coming from Downing Street, very much driven by interests of the Prime Minister himself, towards enhancing the role of the universities in bringing in more and more international students. But that is not about inclusivity. That is about commercial, economic and political roles. It is not just about developing a lifelong learning culture. So there is the occasional mixed motive around.

The other point, which again arose this morning, is that while we are doing, or trying to do, our thing in the lifelong learning mode, we must not forget that there are other genuine aspects of the culture of those to whom we are directing that lifelong learning that are quite critical. I have touched on employment, but there are the others. There is housing, welfare and those sorts of problems. Also, assumptions are made about learning environments in people's homes which are, more often than not for groups that we are trying to help particularly, quite erroneous.
I have included devolution. Coming from Scotland, I cannot ever talk these days without

mentioning devolution. Somehow or other there is a feeling that the world is going to change overnight as if a meteor had landed on us in early May. There will be a change in the political climate, but those sorts of issues that my colleagues from Scotland are concerned with, will be no different from those sorts of issues that friends from England will be concerned with, and that agenda will not change. It may be that there are small divergences in the way in which we act, but the common pursuits, the underlying themes, are not going to change overnight in any abrupt way.

If I go on now and ask the other questions about what forms of access there should be, I can look at the sorts of things that you talked about or were talked to about yesterday. I can ask questions about the University for Industry and flexible partnerships and things of that sort, but I am not sure that these are central. I wait, as you all wait, and you are better informed than I am because I wasn't here yesterday, to really get a feel for what sort of impact the University for Industry is going to have. I will be appalled if it does not build upon existing strengths. Among my many fetishes, one of them is a deep distaste for what I would call the 'not invented here' syndrome. And there are times when, at the back of my mind, I have this worry that the University for Industry is going to embrace the 'not invented here' syndrome and not draw upon the type of expertise and experience which is resident in a room full of people such as this. You know a hell of a lot about the communities you deal with and how to deal with them and what to do and how to deliver and how to interact with every industry or ethnic group or whatsoever. It would be scandalous if that experience were in any way denied. We have to worry about the roles of accrediting and validating in-house courses, but for heaven's sake let us not invent a huge machinery for just doing that. We have mechanisms for doing that far and away enough already.

We have to worry about, as I said, the societal elements. We have to worry about expansion in the various groups of activity. We have not yet much mentioned, although you will learn a lot about it tomorrow, the Open University. There is no doubt that its reputation is deservedly high and its contribution is deservedly high. If my figures are correct (and if they are not, you can check them with John Daniel tomorrow), still 50% of non-traditional learning is delivered by the Open University. But again I have a slight uneasiness about where their current priorities lie and I worry about some of the moves that have taken place that perhaps take out some of the sorts of person-to-person interaction as opposed to the machine-to-person interaction. There are pressures, as we all know, on Summer Schools and on the contact points which were part of the great strength of the Open University for so many years.

In terms of thinking about the strategies that we are all going to embrace, they must reflect our own institutional strengths and again one comes back to the idea: 'know your business'. I do certain things quite well through the University of Glasgow, but there are other things done in Glasgow through sister institutions which are done better by them than by me, or by us. I must recognise that and I must find ways to build bridges between my strengths and someone else's strengths. One of the nice things, again it is a very local phenomenon, about the way in which HE is delivered, is that you can build very nice articulation tracks back through the system for access. Some of you do it effectively outside Scotland, but it is the sort of concept which, when talking abroad, I have always described as 'little steps'. That is, the fact that you do not make people make one horrendous jump from no participation to full-blown participation in a large and awesome and frightening institution. You suck them in gradually. And we hear always about the taster and the access that leads perhaps to HNC and perhaps to HND and perhaps, in due course, to an Access programme and a first year course and so on. We must maintain all of those steps all of the time. But again, some of those steps are much better done by others. I might feel a responsibility towards it but I am better forming a partnership (as was described this morning) with my local sub-degree provider and, through him, with my local community college, than I am seeking to do it myself, because of this demystification thing. And I do not believe one can emphasise that enough.

Well one of the problems one always has to watch out for in these sorts of presentations is that time marches on, so let me just jump ahead a little and talk about one of the other issues that I was interested in - some of the strategies for social equity - because the word equity is in the title. In terms of strategies for social equity, the schools are important and they are not just the traditional schools. Again these are areas, I know, in which many of you work. I suppose, in a sense, that if I end up this afternoon reinforcing your awareness of things that you already do, things which become perhaps just so deeply inculcated in your own way of thinking that you do not think about them very much at all, then that is something I feel that should be done. And this is because there is a tendency for familiarity to breed contempt and for some of your colleagues to recognise 'they are just doing that anyway' and not to realise that it is an on-going process; that having done it once, makes it perhaps marginally easier to do again, but it still requires very considerable effort and very considerable commitment.

We have funding issues in all of these areas of what you are about which of course is where some of this talk began when I was on the other side of the fence. And funding is coming. The Funding Councils do all recognise the need as does the government and there are many other ways in which bridges exist. A number of people south of the border are uneasy, for instance, about the role of these Regional Development Agencies that are building. We of course have had well-funded Regional Development Agencies for a long time, apart from the TEC/LEC equivalent, through what was the Scottish Development Agency and Scottish Enterprise and are now the Regional Enterprise Agencies. They are terrific at creating all sorts of flexible support which we can use to complement the support that comes down other tracks. We have talked about the problems of mature students as well, about issues of some of their reluctance to operate in the domains that we wish them to operate in.

We also talked this morning about the problem of employment - what do you do with people if you create the aspiration and then you do not get them into jobs? And we do know that it is not just in the East End of London, we know that in general mature students have a graduate unemployment rate which is often higher than the graduate unemployment elsewhere in the system. And that is another thing we need to work on in terms of our community linkages and our linkages with employments. We, like others, and I think it should become a total experience as far as it can be done, have gone into a partnership with a local specialist employment agency to create a body called 'Student Templine'. I became worried because I knew every time I go into a restaurant in the west of Glasgow I am waited on in the evenings by my students. So I asked a study to be done on the level of part-time work being undertaken by full-time students and the sort of rewards and pay rates. And the outcome was appalling in terms of the numbers that were involved, the minuscule rates of pay they were getting and the sorts of jobs they were doing. We had the most highly educated shelf-stackers in Scotland, as all of you have in all of your universities. There are lads and lasses setting out in the evenings to do their thing for Tesco or someone or other, for pretty appalling rates, it is pretty mind-boggling stuff. So we went and talked to an agency that specialised in temporary placements and we said, 'look, we have sitting here a very intelligent labour force. Why don't you use your talents to find jobs for that intelligent labour force?'. And we have done that and we have agreed a minimum wage, which is more generous than the government's minimum wage, and we are now beginning to place students in regular, demanding, systematic employment. There is probably now not one bank, among all the banks in Glasgow, that hires temporary labour other than through the University. And they get good vacation jobs, because they are intelligent and reliable and they think and therefore they get up to speed very quickly. And it is a minimal cost if they have got a one-stop shop. The agency's job within the institution is to have the register and that is the sort of thing we have to keep working at. If you do that for mature students as well, and many of these employers like mature students, then what you are actually doing is easing them into the graduate job market in a very important way.

We have a lot of other funny things that go on in Scotland because Scotland can be on occasions quite a funny place and again I would be negligent were I not to mention the University of the Highlands and Islands Project. I just mention it in passing because that is a wonderful networking structure that is being put in place and, if it works, and there is not enough evidence yet that it is going to although most of us expect that it will, it will have a high degree of transportability and will mean that for other peripheral regions there are ways of dealing with issues probably better than we used to deal with them in the past.

We have our own lifelong learning document and some in the room I know have read it. Most of the people in Scotland have read all of the lifelong learning documents that emanate from England. I doubt if the reverse is necessarily true. But I leave that with you, particularly when you remember that much of what we think about up there is based upon a genuinely long and deep educational tradition and the ability to create educational structures which are highly mobile and highly transportable. I popped in to one of the workshops this morning and heard a bit of a discussion about what has been going on in Australia. The experiences there are terribly germane to Scotland because the Australian educational system is, of course, modelled on the Scottish as are those of my own native country, of India, South Africa, Malaysia and Japan. This is because we were very good at recognising what is important in dealing with the world and it was not, on the whole, the Scots going out there as the military (although quite a lot of them were the military) and they certainly were not the Civil Service. They were the teaching profession and the educational profession and that is why I am absolutely sure that a great deal of what is going on up there warrants the very closest of scrutiny. So go away and read *Opportunity Scotland* - not an exciting read, but it is a meaningful one.

Let me conclude then. 'Lifelong Learning in the Mainstream'. All of this conference and all of the workshops and all of the presentations are really about the central issues of access and equity. In that context, we must always have in our mind the different routes that we are putting together and the different roots of those that we are seeking to deal with. We must remember the needs and the demands of the stakeholders. We must ask ourselves what we are migrating towards. We will continue to be higher education institutions, but we must, if we are going to fulfil our role in society, have in brackets that we are also lifelong learning institutions. And here, and this is not a sop at all, it is a genuine belief, we must draw upon existing and strongly implanted experience and seek to learn from the continuing education tradition. A continuing education tradition that you at the moment are nurturing but which has been nurtured over a very long period of time by your predecessors and where there is a great deal to be gained. In a sense, perhaps, it is unfair even to have spent the time talking about lifelong learning as if it were something new. Indeed at times it seems to me that the government has done you and your predecessors a slight disservice in not recognising just how many people have benefited in terms of experience through the commitment and involvement of those who have carried the banner of adult and continuing education for so long.

The Contribution of Lifelong Learning to an Equitable and Inclusive Society

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Abstract

Lifelong learning is in danger of becoming cliché before it becomes a reality. Much of the rhetoric it generates is related to keeping people current for employment. This is undoubtedly significant, although the facts seem to show that job turnover is actually fairly stable. The more important impact of lifelong learning may be its effect in encouraging people to become more active in their communities and in promoting a more equitable and inclusive society. Various trends appear to be making the young graduates of full-time programmes more self-centred in their career goals. Greater emphasis on the private, as compared to the public benefits of higher education reinforces the notion of university study as the passport to membership of an elite.
Evidence from the profile of the student body at the Open University suggests that combining part-time study with employment, family and community obligations may have the opposite effect. If this is true it suggests that lifelong learning may be more valuable for its effects on social cohesion than for its narrowly economic spin-offs.

For related materials see http://www.open.ac.uk/vcs-speeches/.

Introduction

Lifelong learning, equity and inclusion. I am honoured to be one of five present or former vice-chancellors to address you on these issues. I suspect that those who went before me all agreed that they were a good thing. After all, the negatives would clearly be politically incorrect with only 275 days to go to a new millennium. So I'm not here to argue that formal education and training should be restricted to the under-23s, that inequity has a lot going for it, and that exclusion from institutions, as Groucho Marx pointed out, has the virtue of making them more attractive.

But isn't this all a bit too easy? Aren't we living in a world of buzz words and fudge words? Shouldn't the community look to its universities to sharpen up the discourse? Instead of which are not we vice-chancellors simply the bland leading the bland if not the blind leading the blind? I hope that the challenge in your nice safe title tempted my predecessors at this podium off the safe ground of vague consensus because it certainly tempts me.

I spent fifteen years living in Canada under the governments of Pierre Trudeau. His motto was 'create counterweights' and he often expressed the view that whenever a consensus emerged among the establishment it was time for people of honour to start heading in the other direction. It seems to me that these are times for those who hold dear the academic mode of thinking to stand up and be counted because that mode of thinking is under threat in today's Britain.

I say that without any party political *parti pris* and I must stress that point because the present government is rather thin-skinned when it comes to dissonant messages. Being thin-skinned is no doubt better than wearing the metal carapace that was a feature of the governments of the 1980s. My point is that in a democratic society governments should be neither thin-skinned or thick-skinned. Their duty is to tell the citizenry the truth as they see it and to engage in dialogue about it. Instead we see a trend, that has developed for at least a decade, for governments to blur the truth and manipulate the dialogue.

Today the main aim of government news management is to gain good coverage in the tabloids which are the antithesis of the academic mode of thinking. Some of the so-called quality newspapers are steadily paying less attention to analysis and a search for truth and giving more and more space to opinions and assertions. Last year two of my fellow vice-chancellors took the education editor of one of the broadsheets out to lunch to remonstrate with him about the one-sided coverage of university issues. Their guest was blunt. His publisher was taking the paper down market and he, the education editor, was following the trend and giving people what they wanted to read. Why should he buck the trend and ask people to think?

Much of the electronic media have explicitly given up the search for accuracy and replaced it by the much fuzzier concept of fairness, which means giving equal time to two views on an issue even if one of the views is groundless or if there are more than two valid viewpoints. Fairness is also a word much loved by governments, and who can be against it? What could be more British? Isn't fair play our national game?

The problem with fairness, which is its virtue politicians and journalists, is that it means all things to all people. In the old days, when the left stood for equality and the right stood for enterprise we knew where we were. Today both stand for fairness as they compete for the centre ground. Canada's Tory party calls itself the Progressive Conservatives. Governor George Bush is polishing up the notion of 'compassionate conservatism' as he winds himself up to bid for the White House. Here in Britain we have the 'Third Way'. I don't doubt Tony Blair's sincerity in trying to find some serious intellectual underpinnings for a third way between socialism and capitalism but the project hasn't delivered much yet.

I guess this search for the third way goes back to the governments of Pierre Trudeau in Canada in the 1970s and early 1980s. Indeed, it seems to me that Trudeau, who is probably the most intellectually honest western politician of the last thirty years, did more to think through the third way than anyone has done since. However, lots of people are now trying because the 1990s have created a new political environment with the breaching of the Berlin Wall in Europe and the attenuation of *apartheid* in Africa.

Socialist is a busted flush. True Marxists may whine that neither the Soviet Union nor China really gave socialism a proper whirl, but most people think there is enough evidence to conclude that socialism is no way to run a society. Only a few years ago it looked as if capitalism now had the field to itself. Francis Fukayama proclaimed the end of history. Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan assumed that their neo-liberal agenda would live for at least a thousand years.

But there is clearly a problem. The right-wing neo-liberal agenda doesn't seem to be playing as well in either Plymouth or Peoria as its promoters think it should, and that goes for most other parts of the world as well. There is hardly a government of the right left in Europe, the right in Canada is in disarray and in the United States the Democrats are doing better than the Republicans.

You didn't ask me here to push any homespun political philosophy but I do want to start by suggesting that we probably haven't reached the end of history or even the end of the history of political ideas. We should welcome the attempts by Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, George Bush, Gerhard Schr^der and others to develop politics and policies. We know, of course, that a key purpose of exploring avenues like the Third Way and Compassionate Conservatism is to find the centre ground that most voters seem to like, but in a democracy there is nothing wrong with that.

Our duty in universities is to make the debate as honest as possible. In the old days, with the right rooting for enterprise and the left lobbying for equality we knew where we were. Today with both sides promoting the much vaguer concept of fairness there are more questions to ask. We in universities should be asking them.

It is too easy for people in universities to point fingers at politicians, journalists and celebrities and accuse them of intellectual dishonesty, obfuscation and spin-doctoring. We ought to ask ourselves how it comes about that the trend to trivialisation and superficiality in our mass media is happening in a decade when the proportion of young people going to university has increased by fifty percent. Surely there should be more people out there than ever who understand the use of reason, who have the habit of assessing the evidence, and who can see different sides to the issues of the day?

What I shall explore this morning are some of the implications, for the university continuing education community, of the times we live in. I have taken as my title *The Contribution of Lifelong Learning to an Equitable and Inclusive Society*. I hope you will apply due scepticism to my conclusion, which I regard as tentative but I will give you in advance. It is that we may see a considerable reversal of roles, in the coming years, between university continuing education and what we think of as the core functions and values of universities.

The search for the core

What do we think of as the core functions and values of universities? How are they changing? Let me look at change on four dimensions.

Physical:

First, even in Cambridge is clear that the geography of universities has changed. Here the presence of the university is delimited in stone and there are cloisters - a word that means closed. But those limits have been meaningless for a generation.

My founding predecessor at the OU, Walter Perry, told the first staff to design the learning system for a lighthouse keeper off the Scottish coast. Today OU students are everywhere. 30,000 people are taking our courses outside the UK and we examined them in 111 countries last year. Last month I visited one of the Princes of Saudi Arabia in his palace and was told that members of his family were studying OU courses upstairs.

So the physical boundaries of the academy are increasingly meaningless, although that shouldn't deceive us into ignoring the cultural boundaries that exist between peoples. Don't swallow all the facile talk about the globalisation of the academy. For her book *Globalising Education* my colleague Robin Mason studied programmes from various countries that claimed to be international and found that few of them really were. In most cases they are programs designed for a national context that enrol a few students overseas. There's nothing wrong with that but let's call a spade a spade.

Clientele:
Second, the way we used define the core of the university in terms of student clientele is changing. In respect to age profile it's now a decade since the number of college students over 23 years old began to exceed the younger age group. Today university education involves the whole age range. At the Open University the bell curve of our age profile is becoming even flatter. We have always had the vast majority of our students in the 25-40 age bracket but the proportion at the extremes of the range is growing steadily. At last count we had 7,000 students over 60 and 800 over 80. Even more interestingly, the proportion of young students aged under 24 has grown by a factor of three in the last five years, even though we do not recruit in the secondary schools.

So lifelong learning is becoming a reality as well as a slogan. But have we taken on board the implications of lifelong learning for the university curriculum? Does lifelong learning mean more of the same for the rest of your life? Presumably not. However, if we are going to be dropping back into study throughout our lives that ought to affect what we do in our first years of university study.

Nearly forty years ago, when I was at Oxford, few graduates, except those planning academic careers, expected to do higher degrees. They completed undergraduate degrees that were academic rather than vocational in nature and the intellectual skills they acquired were expected to last for their career and probably are doing so in many cases. Subjects had diversified somewhat from the days when an undergraduate degree in classics was the preferred qualification for running the world's largest empire but that system was still faintly recognisable. Graduates of my generation who did return to study mostly concentrated on more vocational subjects, like accountancy and the omnipresent MBA.

Today, the proportion of people continuing their education after the phase of compulsory schooling has grown enormously and this has changed the core curriculum in content and purpose.

Curricular:

The evolution of the curriculum has created two changes. First, a high proportion of today's university students are doing vocational courses: business studies and information technology being two very popular lines. Second, and partly as a consequence, the distinctions between vocational curricula as between the last years of secondary school, the FE colleges, the University for Industry and the real universities are increasingly blurred.

A good example of this is the courses that various IT companies run to train people for employment as users, operators or installers of their hardware or software. There is no question that those who complete these programs are very employable. In the USA they earn more than people with a BSc in Computing. How they fit into the traditional curricular structure is less clear to us.

Moral:

Fourth, let me suggest, at the risk of being misunderstood, that the moral core of the university in changing. I don't mean that vice-chancellors are any more or less upright than they were half a century ago. I mean that our assumptions about the purpose of establishing and operating universities are becoming blurred. Until recently, even in the United States, where diversity in higher education is prized, universities have been run for altruistic reasons. The kings, queens, bishops, industrialists and merchants who endowed our older universities believed that education was a good thing and providing more opportunities for education was a noble act. No doubt they also wanted to erect monuments to themselves as they did so, but their motivation was primarily altruistic.

Later, as governments started funding universities, that motivation did not change fundamentally. The creation of the polytechnics and the Open University arose from a desire to bring the benefits of university teaching and research to a wider society. This aim of public service continues to be a core purpose of universities. The Open University, which celebrates its thirtieth anniversary next month, has written into its Royal Charter the aim that it should 'promote the educational wellbeing of the community generally'.

Clearly the creation of for-profit and corporate universities is a major change to this tradition. It is too early to say how this new trend will develop. No doubt the current Wall Street enthusiasm for seeking profits from university education will dissipate, but whether it does or not, for-profit institutions certainly blur the moral boundaries of the academy.

Those are four ways in which the old core of the university has become buried under some fuzzy outer layers of ends and means. Universities are physically dispersed; they teach all sorts and conditions of people; their curricula blend seamlessly with those of other levels and styles of education and training; and they serve a range of moral purposes.

Searching for the core

Let's try to penetrate those fuzzy layers and find if the core is still recognisable. I realise that this is an unusual task at a meeting of leaders of university continuing education. Usually you leave it to your more philosophical academic colleagues to follow in the footsteps of John Henry Newman while you get on with the practical business of supplying what the customers actually want.

I take you down this route because I believe that in the age of lifelong learning more customers than hitherto will want courses and programs that reflect the core purpose of universities as well as the bread and butter offerings that help them in their jobs.

Two years ago Lord Dearing and his group concluded their enquiry into UK higher education. My colleague Diana Laurillard, whom some of you will know, was a member of his Committee of Enquiry. I have found the Committee's work and her reflections on it very helpful in identifying the core of today's university enterprise.

The Dearing Committee said that the role of universities is '*to enable society to maintain an independent understanding of itself and its world*'. Let's unpack that statement.

It focuses on *society*, not the nation, because this is a global world. University teaching can now cross national borders in the way that research has always done.

It talks about *maintaining* an understanding, not communicating an understanding, because things change, each society is in flux, theories evolve, understanding develops.

The definition talks about 'understanding *of itself*' because the understanding reached must be widely owned and disseminated. Understanding is not the preserve of an elite, but of a learning society.

The word *independent* is there to capture the unique role of universities as creators of understanding. In a knowledge society many claim the right to help us interpret and understand the world. However, most of those claimants: the media; industrial and government research centres; think tanks; and the new breed of corporate universities; cannot be independent of commercial and political interests. The individualistic and disinterested nature of the true university remains unique.

Finally, *understanding* means going beyond information, it means going beyond knowledge, it means knowledge acquired with the sense of responsibility for how it comes to be known that can make it the foundation for action.

If that is the role of the university what must be the style of university learning? It must not stop at the transmission of information, nor at the communication of knowledge. It means the development of understanding. That is an iterative process involving a dialogue with oneself and others that moves toward a shared understanding. That shared understanding carries with it a critical distance leading eventually to a personal perspective from which learners take responsibility for what they know, how they came to know it and where they may properly apply it. Put another way, knowledge alone is insufficient; university education implies an understanding of the nature of knowledge.

We must recognise that from this perspective much of what universities now do, and particularly what departments of continuing education do, is not university work.

I hasten to say that I do not blame you and I do not blame universities for this. Our societies have urged us to inculcate simple skills and to transmit well-codified knowledge and we have eagerly complied. Such activities have, however, obscured the core role of universities and encouraged a host of new players, who may well be better than established universities at teaching straightforward skills and knowledge, to call themselves universities and move into the field.

Looking at the wider economy of universities it is easy to be worried by these trends. Some universities have made their books balance by charging a mark-up for teaching some of the simple skills and well-codified knowledge in areas like business and IT that help the economy along. No one pretends that this kind of teaching requires much independence of thought. Indeed, the individualistic and disinterested nature of the true university style may be a positive handicap. However, lots of individuals and employers want this kind of teaching and most of our universities are supplying it.

Today various new providers are moving in to focus exclusively on that kind of teaching. In some jurisdictions, like certain states in the USA, these new suppliers are making inroads into enrolments at existing universities. Because they have a tight focus they do a good job within their frame of reference and have low overheads. Because American universities have been overpriced the newcomers are able to make good profits. Because they had to prise open a market they have been very student-centred, giving students precedence over faculty when it comes to parking and similar revolutionary moves. They have made themselves distinctive. Some of them positively boast about the fact that they are little interested in the nature of knowledge, disinterested enquiry, independent thought and nourishment of teaching by research. But of course they are very eager to gain accreditation as universities and boast about it.

One term for this phenomenon is unbundling. Traditional universities offer a bundle of services; in teaching, research, community involvement, staffing hospitals and the like. Like all organisations offering a bundle of services we cross subsidise between them. All industries suffer upheavals when new providers come along, unbundle a set of services and concentrate on offering the ones that bundled organisations are using as a primary source of subsidy for services that are less financially robust.

How should we respond to this development once we've got over the stage of calling these newcomers by rude names: cherry pickers, cream skimmers or worse? Clearly we must use this development as an incentive for change. I suggest three areas of change, in ascending order of challenge, that should be of interest to university continuing education.

The first is simple. If the for-profit, virtual and corporate universities are really providing better customer care and nuts-and-bolts services to students than we are - then there is a nice benchmark for us to match. That is not rocket science nor an affront to our academic dignity.

Second, if we believe what we preach about independent thought, understanding the nature of knowledge and the importance of discourse between students and active researchers then we should apply that. I mean apply it even - perhaps particularly - in those areas of the curriculum where we have slipped into contenting ourselves with basic knowledge and skills transfer.

It happens that I am presently on the receiving end of an attempt to do that and I'm enjoying it. Allow me a short digression. I've been a student for most of my career. One of the advantages of heading a distance teaching university is that you can take courses from your own university without embarrassing anyone by having the VC sitting with other students in the lecture theatre. This year I'm taking a Web-based course entitled *T171 You, Your Computer and the Net*. I'm doing it for two reasons. First I expect that it will make me a more sophisticated and confident user of the technologies I use every day - and slightly less dependent on my office staff when I get stuck. Second, it enables me to sample the kind of service we give to students and, in this case, to assess for myself the pros and cons of Web-based learning.

I'm six weeks into this 36-week course and have just submitted my first assignment. It's going well. My major surprises have been how much I'm required to think and expected to communicate with other students. It was only after several weeks that I noticed the course had the subtitle *Learning and Living in the Information Age*. The course takes seriously the fact that e-mail and computer conferences are new forms of human interaction and so we study some of the relevant literature on transactions. It also assumes that that noisy information environment that is the World Wide Web requires its users to have the skills to sift and assess information and its sources so the course trains us in that too. Furthermore, the course insists that technologies come with a history and makes us study the history of the PC and the Net in order to understand how we got to where we are today.

It would be perfectly possible to teach a course called *You, Your Computer and the Net*, even in a university, and be content with showing people how to use the hardware and software while throwing in some tips about good practice. As a university student, however, I find it appropriate that my course is subtitled *Learning and Living in the Information Age* and obliges me to think critically about the role and impact of this technology. Unfortunately I can't tell you how the course has gone over with students generally because this is the first presentation. It is a pilot presentation limited to only 750 students but I'm sure it will do well when the enrolments climb into the thousands next year.

The third area of change grows out of that example but has more far-reaching implications. I believe that there is now a major role for continuing education in exposing its students much more explicitly to the academic mode of thinking than we have done before. I believe further that doing that will be a very important contribution to the betterment of society in the next century.

That's rather sweeping, so let me explain further and cite the evidence from the Open University that inspires this line of thinking. Two years the HEQC conducted a major survey of graduates with the aim of trying to define a concept called *graduateness*. The basic question was: how is someone changed by doing a university degree? Graduates from all universities were included in the sample and, not surprisingly, the results did not differ greatly from institution to institution, except in one case. Graduates from the Open University, much more than graduates from elsewhere, said that university study had changed their lives.

At first sight that is odd. After all, the average age of OU students on entry is 34 so you would think their lives had achieved a degree of stability. Comments about not being able to teach old dogs new tricks come to mind. Conversely, you might think that the young, malleable students who study full-time at university after secondary school would be changed by the experience of university. No doubt they are, but if so they are much less aware of it than our older OU students, perhaps because it is mixed in with the general process of maturation.

How do Open University graduates say that study has changed them? Like all graduates they find that the degree has made them more employable. However, our mature students give greater importance to personal development than to employability. The American author Patricia Lunneborg has written two books, *OU Women* and *OU Men*, based on in-depth interviews with Open University graduates. They mention new careers, better job opportunities, more self-confidence, a sense of achievement, more opportunities in life and new friends as the results of their studies.

I particularly appreciated the man who told her, with a mixture of satisfaction and exasperation, that ever since doing a degree with the Open University he couldn't see less than six sides to any question. That is what it is all about, the inculcation of the academic mode of thinking that makes hypotheses, and the development of the systematic scepticism that examines the evidence. If young full-time students gravitate increasingly to vocationally related courses and approach their university experience with more utilitarian and instrumental attitudes there is a danger that they may graduate with little proficiency in the academic mode of thinking and an attitude of credulity to authority and the tabloids rather than systematic scepticism.

On the evidence I've given it may be somewhat later, as lifelong learners, that they become mature students in both senses of the term: ready to seek understanding; more alert to the nature of knowledge; open to a discourse about what can be known.

Each year, at our twenty-five degree ceremonies, many thousands of Open University graduates comment to me individually about their studies. A surprising number do second, third and even fourth baccalaureate degrees. I've often heard the comment; 'I'm now studying properly what I only did superficially as a young student doing my first degree'.

You get my drift. University education, in its fullest sense, may well be wasted on the young. It is only later, as minds are matured by life experience, that they are ready for real university study. That gives continuing education a more prominent role than it has claimed in the past in promoting fundamental academic values. Perhaps we are returning to an older human tradition which valued the wisdom of older people. You could argue that for most of this century we have tried to provide wisdom through the university education of a small elite of very able young people. Now that we are many more young people beyond school it is natural that the focus is on making them occupationally competent rather than precociously wise.

But there is more. There is evidence that university study as a mature person makes a proportion of people more likely to get involved in the life of the wider community. I expect that Open University data is typical. 46% of our graduates report an enhanced interest in current affairs, reading non-fiction and watching more serious TV programs. 40% said that as a result of their studies they had become more interested in helping people in need. 20% had become more involved in cultural activities. 10% had become more involved in political activities. These are minority percentages which imply that the behaviour and interests of the majority of graduates do not change on these dimensions. But that's fine, we are talking about education, not brainwashing.

Nevertheless, those who change are substantial minorities. Those percentages, applied to an OU graduating class exceeding 10,000 each year, are a contribution to a more cohesive society that becomes very significant if you add in similar proportions of the mature graduates from all universities. This assumes, of course, that engagement with the wider community is a good thing, but I plead guilty to that charge. A future where we simply live and move nervously in and between the electronic security of our separate gated communities, be they smart condominiums, prisons, universities or office buildings, is not one that appeals to me.

I find it interesting that 10% of OU graduates get more involved in political activities. Some universities, especially in the USA, have become concerned about the utilitarian and self-centred attitudes of their students. They have set up programmes to get them involved in the community. They find that it is easy to get students interested in grassroots community activity and giving help to individuals but very difficult to get them interested in the political process. I have the impression that young students here have a similar scepticism about politics.

Older students may also have a low opinion of politicians but they also realise, more than the youngsters, that politics matters because society works in certain ways. I'm simply suggesting that, apart from the few young aspirants who aim to move effortlessly from office in the Oxford or Cambridge Unions to a seat in the Cabinet, it may be our older graduates who have more potential to change politics for the better.

Thomas Jefferson, who is arguably the greatest public figure that the modern world has produced, said that humanity divides into two groups. There are those who fear and distrust the people and those who identify with the people and have confidence in them. It makes me proud that one product of Open University study is numbers of graduates who identify with the people and do something about it in the Jeffersonian tradition.

Those who have confidence in the people have always argued that consciousness is the key to improvements in the human condition. However, our power structures usually see the consciousness of the citizenry as a danger which must be lulled and channelled towards the inoffensive and superficial. I suggested earlier that Britain has seemed particularly prone to follow this route in the 1990s. We each have our views on where to raise the consciousness of our fellow citizens. The point of producing graduates who engage with the community is not to channel its concerns in a particular direction but to encourage the general civic consciousness that is the foundation for decent democracy.

For me the Canadian author John Ralston Saul makes a persuasive analysis. In his book *Voltaire's Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason in the West* he argues that since the Enlightenment we have perverted the use of reason by confusing it with technocratic expertise. We have become a society that wants instant answers from experts to each new question. Saul argues that a mature society should often prefer to live in doubt than to put its faith in such instant answers. I hope that my Open University graduate who cannot see less than six sides to any question will contribute to a society that is comfortable with doubt.

In that respect such graduates, whether from the Open University or from your programs of continuing education, can provide a vital counterweight to the false certainties of the experts. Saul recalls that for the Romans *sensus communis* meant humanity and sensibility as well as common sense. Our more restricted use of the term common sense is, as he puts it, 'the narrowing effect of a civilisation which seeks automatically to divide through answers when our desperate need is to unify the individual through questions'.

I said that I would talk about ends and means. I hope that those comments about the superior qualities of mature graduates have blurred the boundaries of your thinking about the mission of continuing education. What about the means of producing them?

Supported Open Learning

The Open University operates on the basis of a model of distance education that it calls *Supported Open Learning*. It has four key ingredients: 1) excellent learning materials; 2) individual academic support to each student; 3) effective administration and logistics; and 4) teaching rooted in research. The world's largest distance teaching universities, which I have written about elsewhere as the *mega-universities*, owe their considerable success to these principles of supported open learning which they have introduced with appropriate local variants. By operating flexibly at large scale, with low costs and with good quality, the mega-universities have created a revolution in higher education.

How should the mega-universities, how should all universities react to the new technological forces of change? The response should recognise that these forces present threats to universities as well as opportunities. What are they?

First, new technology makes it easier to access information. But remember that university teaching is much more than this.

Second, technology tends to drive the curriculum towards skills rather than knowledge and understanding.

Third, technology is best exploited by teams whereas universities emphasise the creativity of the individual academic.

What is the best response to the opportunities and the most effective answer to the threats posed by technology? I distinguish first between hard technologies and soft technologies. Hard technologies are bits and bytes, electrons and pixels, satellites and search engines. Soft technologies are processes, approaches, sets of rules and models of organisation.

My key conclusion is that if you want to use the hard technologies for university-level teaching and learning that is both intellectually powerful and competitively cost-effective then you must concentrate on getting the soft technologies right.

These technologies are simply the working practices that underpin the rest of today's modern industrial and service economy: division of labour, specialisation, teamwork and project management. But these are not the traditional working practices of universities. Although universities specialise and divide labour as between disciplines, the habit in teaching is for the same individual to do everything: develop the curriculum; organise the learning resources; teach the class; and provide academic support.

This robust, cottage-industry model does not require much organisation. However, it also does not allow us to reconfigure the eternally challenging triangle of cost-access-quality in the directions of lower costs, greater access and higher quality.

The mega-universities have been able to reconfigure that eternal triangle and we should look to them for inspiration. Their achievements are remarkable. In most cases costs per student are significantly lower than those of conventional universities in the same country. They have expanded access dramatically - the dozen mega-universities enrol over three million students between them. They are steadily gaining a reputation for quality. I see in the QAA's recently published Annual Report that the Open University was the only university to achieve a maximum score of 24/24 Teaching Quality Assessment of General Engineering. Cambridge, dare I whisper it here, had to be satisfied with 23/24.

The mega-universities have achieved this feat by adopting the soft technologies of modern enterprise that I listed. Division of labour means that some people develop learning materials, others support students, yet others provide logistic support and so on.

Division of labour means specialisation, and this enables the university to focus special training and resources on each function. For example, the Open University spends nearly two million pounds annually on training its 7,000 associate lecturers who provide support to individual students. They become highly skilled at that task and very dedicated to their students.

Once you have division of labour and specialisation then teamwork is necessary if you want the whole to be greater than the sum of the parts. But experience also shows that when academics develop courses in teams the outcome is superior, in both academic and pedagogical terms, to what an individual could do alone. This is because the work of the course team is a splendid example of the development of understanding through systematic scepticism.

The course team engages in an iterative process which involves academics and other professionals in a dialogue that moves toward a shared understanding. Instead of simply repackaging the current scholarly orthodoxy this process moves the academic paradigms forward. I cite a new Open University course, *Understanding Cities*, as a good example of this. In teaching students how to think about the mega-cities that will dominate the world in the next century, the course team found it needed radically to revise the standard thinking about cities. The impact of this work will be felt across the whole international academic community and not just by the few thousand students who will take the course.

Finally, division of labour, specialisation and teamwork all require project management. The university itself has to take responsibility for seeing that it all hangs together.

How do I sum all this up? Very simply. Success in the coming era requires a radical change of focus. The tradition in universities is that the individual teacher teaches. The future is that the university teaches. You in continuing education, who do tend to see your institutions as a totality, rather than as a federation of academic entrepreneurs united by a common grievance over parking, should find that congenial.

For your colleagues in the departments this may be a radical change of focus but it does actually take us back to the roots of universities in medieval times. If the future reinforces the notion of a community of scholars acting collectively to enable society to maintain an independent understanding of itself and its world that will be progress.

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After Dinner Speech

Baroness Nora David

I was very flattered to be asked to speak at this conference, but apprehensive, particularly when I saw the list of speakers, all of whom - and worse, all of you the practitioners - know far more about lifelong learning than I ever shall. But I have been committed for a very long time.

My initiation was as a Councillor in Cambridge, where there was the lively tradition of Henry Morris, that man of vision, who had created the village colleges, where cradle to grave education could take place, where the premises could be used all day, where the whole community could be involved. This was social inclusion. This was inspirational stuff, and I saw it working.

My further education was accelerated when I was made a Life Peer in 1978, a Baroness-in-Waiting, with some responsibility for education six months later, but the advent of Mrs Thatcher in May 1978 put an end to that. From then on the powers of Local Government were gradually eroded and the Local Education Authorities lost more and more of their responsibilities. I found myself an opposition spokesman for about twelve of those eighteen years of Tory rule. It was a grim time, with an Education Bill almost every year. With an in-built Tory majority it was very difficult to change any legislation. It took a coalition of Labour, Liberal, cross benchers and a few enlightened Tories to amend a Bill. One had to organise, exhort, plead and persuade - no wonder we need to reform the House of Lords! One success of which I am proud to boast is that we managed to prevent the abolition of the Transport Grant in the 1980 Bill. I put down an amendment, backed by Rab Butler, the Duke of Norfolk (anxious about Catholic schools) and Nancy Seer (a Liberal). We won!

Then we went on to the abolition of the ILEA, famous for its special and its adult education. Then the Baker Reform Bill of 1988, where our prediction that it would not work proved to be correct and more Education Bills had to be introduced to slim down the national curriculum, and so on.

Since May 1997, I believe that things are looking up, that lifelong learning is getting a boost. As a County Councillor, so long ago, I learned a lot about second chances (and that is what continuing education is all about) from my experience of further education colleges in Cambridge. I saw that 16-18 year-olds, who had succeeded in schools, benefited from the more relaxed atmosphere, the different teaching methods, the flexible curriculum, the greater freedom. Could this, I wonder, suit disaffected 14 year-olds who pose such a problem?

I thought then that the second chance should be available to all those who have missed out, to the women whose children have become less dependent, to the unemployed, to those whose education stopped at sixteen. There is a lot of unmarked potential out there. The opportunities for wider participation and the money are beginning to come. There are the Return to Study courses, the Access courses, and the Outreach courses which you supply.

Just last week I heard of one - Nora Weekes, of Jamaican origin, just over 50, with five sons now grown up and gone from home. She decided to have a go, went to a Return to Study course at West Thames College and from there to an Access course at Hillcroft, where she had to leave her course because of a difficult divorce. Hillcroft took her back and she gained a place at St Mary's College for a degree course in English, Greek History and Latin. If we want to catch these students, there most be flexibility, the ability to come and go, to count to your credit the achievements you have gained, no matter when.

The opportunity is one thing, the money is another. The Government has put money where its mouth is. The Comprehensive Spending Review has promised £776,000,000 for Higher Education and £725,000,000 for Further Education over the next two years, with a promise for more to come in year 3. Money and opportunity are now enough. We have to revitalise Britain and not just the economy. People must feel that they belong, that they are involved with both present and future. If they don't feel this, they won't vote. (Look at the dismal tally in local elections.) They don't enter into the work of the schools attended by their children and they don't have confidence in themselves.

Lifelong learning has two sides; the first is the practical, the vocational. We need a better-educated and trained workforce, with new skills, to compete effectively in the global economy. People want these skills to improve their chances of promotion, to acquire a higher living standard and a more interesting life.

The other side is the personal, the inward conviction, and it is here that we are in trouble. I sometimes feel that the age-old virtues of knowledge and understanding have gone by the board, that we may be faced with a generation unable to choose between one piece of information and another, who will be incapable of judging the value of what they see, hear and do. I feel that lifelong learning should have educational and civic purposes as well as vocational advance.

At my age, I want to put in a piece of special pleading. Lifelong means from birth to death and, sure enough, we are doing more for the under fives: between five and sixteen we provide a national curriculum. We are about to reorganise 16-19 education yet again. There is a new deal for the 18-25s, 25 plus and now 50 plus, but who is thinking of the retired and the elderly who, with each advancing year, become a heavier layer of the population? Firms like Rover and Ford support their workers in all kinds of learning projects on the grounds that a workforce is better alert than inert. Isn't it equally important to keep the minds of older people alive, if only to lighten the load on the body politic? There is a good deal of moaning about how awful it is going to be with all these dead weights, but who is doing constructive thinking about it?

Here, I want to pay a tribute to Peter Laslett who, together with Michael Young, has been the great innovator. Peter himself has not had the recognition he deserved. First came the National Extension College here in Cambridge, where I was lucky enough to be a trustee for seventeen years, and that led to the Open University, for which Wilson and Jenny Lee got most of the credit. Now he has created the U3A, started here in Cambridge. There are now about 380 in the

UK. Already there are 70 in Australia, 30 in New Zealand and some in Europe. They are independent, they are cheap, no exams, no credits (thank goodness - too much stress on qualifications now), no paid teachers, but learning exchanges. (Tilda Gaskell was eloquent on it in a workshop this afternoon). It has given immense pleasure to thousands in the Third Age, helping to keep at bay the dreaded Fourth Age.

This conference is about inclusion. All of you here are from the Higher Education sector, but we must remember those at the other end of the spectrum - the illiterate, the enumerate. Last week we were reminded of them and the dismal record this country has by the publication of the Moser Report, 'Improving Literacy and Numeracy - A Fresh Start'. It brings the awful facts home. I find it staggering that millions of children have been leaving school, hardly able to read and write. This has resulted in millions of adults with the same problem. We think we are an educated nation, yet 20% of adults, roughly seven million people, have difficulty in reading a newspaper. One in four cannot calculate the change from £2 if they buy a loaf costing 65p and two cans of beans costing 45p each. Of the twelve countries assessed by the International Adult Survey, Britain came tenth in both reading and arithmetic, only Poland and Ireland being below us. Lifelong learning is going to have to tackle this quite literally from the cradle - well, I don't suppose to quite the grave, but as near as maybe! I learned a new word last week - 'opsimath' - one who learns late in life. Our pledge must be to halve the number of the illiterate and the enumerate of working age by the year 2005. Of course it will cost money, but money will be found. The poor must be helped to buy books, to pay for travel, particularly in rural areas. Rural communities must not be left out. Moser has many proposals, involving employers and Government. They must be implemented.

We must *all* get a superb campaign going to widen participation at *all* levels. We are too close to the Millennium to jump on that over-loaded bandwagon, but we need a great twenty-first century push (and it will take a long time) to boost Britain up those shaming survey tables. *You* are the people to lead that campaign, and we politicians must be sure to give you support - and cash!

I would like to thank UACE for a fascinating conference, a real learning experience for me. My congratulations and thanks to Mike Richardson and his colleagues for organising such a superb event. It has been a huge pleasure to be here and to meet so many of you.

PAPERS, ABSTRACTS & WORKSHOPS

IN FROM THE MARGINS

The Transition Experience of Disabled Students into Higher Education

Len Spriggs

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Abstract

Recruiting and supporting disabled students is an integral part of Sheffield Hallam University's commitment to widening participation and the transition to university is a critical period for the disabled student. Research findings are reported on the preparation for university; the admission and induction process and the Semester One experience.

Introduction

As an integral part of its policy of widening participation (1) (2), Sheffield Hallam has a particular commitment to the recruitment and support of disabled students. This work is the specific responsibility of the Disabled Student Support Team whose philosophy and approach is informed by the 'social model of disability' which is based on the recognition that:

> 'Disability is the disadvantage or restriction of activity *caused* by contemporary social organisation... Disability is, therefore, *imposed* upon people who have an impairment and can, with a reorganisation of society, be removed' (3).

As disability is something imposed on top of any particular impairment by disabling barriers there is no necessary causal relationship between impairment and disability. As Sally French points out, 'blindness is an impairment but lack of access to written information is a disability' (4). From this perspective disability is viewed as a problem located within society rather than within individuals who happen to have impairments. The use of the term 'disabled students' is, therefore, quite deliberate. By accepting that disability is socially constructed the onus lies with the University to identify what barriers are presented to disabled students and to determine how to remove them.

However, the Social Model has been criticised on a number of grounds. Firstly, it is seen as presenting an 'oversocialised' view of disability which simply replaces psychological or medical determinism with social determinism, failing to recognise that an individual's perception of a situation can influence the outcome of that situation. Secondly, it fails to recognise individual differences. Thirdly, it doesn't adequately connect with the subjective *experience* of impairment. For example, according to Morris, 'While environmental barriers and social attitudes are a crucial part of our experience of disability ... to suggest that this is all there is to it is to deny the personal experience of physical or intellectual restrictions ...'(5) and for Liz Crowe, 'This self-interpretation adds a whole new layer of personal, subjective interpretations to the objective concept of impairment. With this approach, the experiences and history of our impairments become a part of our autobiography'(6).

Pre-enrolment Experience

It is this autobiography which the disabled student brings to university - would disabled students bring a set of behaviours, skills, and expectations to university which conflict with what was required to succeed in higher education?

When asked if they had received any 'specialist' support linked to their disability at their previous school or college, 60% reported that they had, whilst 28% had not. In terms of general academic/skill support, students reported the following:

Support	yes%	no%	Not applicable No response
Examination technique	58	29	13
Essay writing	62	27	11
IT course/training	49	33	18
Support with mathematics	30	51	19
Note taking	30	50	20
Report writing	33	47	20
Group work	48	33	19
Group presentation	41	41	18
Other	4	32	64

There is clearly a wide variation in the exposure to study skill support prior to arriving at University. When asked if they felt they were adequately prepared *before* they came to University 74% felt that they were. However, when we asked them to reflect on this *after* their Semester One experience only 36% felt that they were well prepared.

Admission and Enrolment

The main concerns of disabled students prior to arriving at University were:

- quality of pre-enrolment/course information;
- reassurance that they would get initial support;
- anxieties about 'competing with non-disabled students' and whether sufficient 'allowance' would be made for their disability.

What they wanted most was:

- detailed pre-course information about what kind of support they can expect;
- early meetings with support staff to agree what support will be provided, and ideally, meeting with tutors to discuss what was expected of them on their course.

What emerged from this part of the survey was a mixture of 'competence anxiety' and a 'need for security'. Students were anxious that their needs would be taken into account and that they would get all the support they felt they needed. Della Fazey talks about 'competence motivation' in the sense that 'we all like to feel competent and to demonstrate that competence to others' (7). There was thus a danger that if disabled students didn't feel secure in the knowledge that their 'needs' would be met then their motivation for study would be diminished. The disabled students we spoke to didn't so much doubt their competence but rather whether they would be able to demonstrate it to others.

What seemed to be at the forefront of their minds was that they did have 'special' needs and that they needed to feel 'in control' of their learning environment. One example of this is the notion of a 'personal sense of control' and in this context research shows, that 'perceptions of control have been found to determine levels of disability, even allowing for level of impairment ' (Johnson, 8).

Student Induction

Disabled students are invited to a special induction programme before non-disabled students enrol. What many appreciated was the opportunity to get to know the University; as one student said, 'it gave me the chance to explore the University... before I had to compete with other students'.

What disabled students welcomed, in order of importance, was:

- meeting the Disabled Student Support Team;
- arranging Support Needs;
- information about the range of support services at Hallam;
- information about specific facilities such as Library and IT support.

but they felt it could be improved through:

- greater opportunity to meet other disabled students;

- more detailed information about support services;
- improved course-related information;
- specific information/guidance as what would be expected of them as students.

Basically, this seemed to amount to finding out, in as much detail as possible, what support was available, making personal contact and the need to feel 'in control' in the sense of knowing what to expect, all of which they saw as important in reducing uncertainty.

Semester One Experience

Although student experience varied, and in general the majority had a positive experience, a significant minority reported the following difficulties:

- 25% felt that they were not given enough information about their course before they arrived at University;
- 20% reported problems obtaining details of their assessment schedule;
- 13% found it difficult to make friends and get to know other students;
- 11% reported that teaching staff were not helpful.

Despite being reasonably positive about their early experiences of the University, 34% stated that they had seriously considered leaving their programme of study. The reasons most commonly stated for considering withdrawing or changing programme were one, or a combination of, the following:

Financial problems	19%
Accommodation problems	10%
Health problems	21%
Homesickness	12%
Problems at home	10%
Difficulties getting to know other students	12%
Not liking or getting on with staff (faculty)	7%
Programme/course too difficult	19%
Problems with particular units/modules	36%
Programme/Course not meeting objectives	43%

When asked to report on the weak points/major disappointments of the semester, student comments revealed a clear theme which centred on the notion of '*independent learning*'. The University's policy is to develop the 'independent or 'autonomous' learner and to structure teaching accordingly. This was clearly a source of concern for the vast majority of disabled students, being perceived, in general, in terms of lack of personal support and it does seem to be an example of what Ruth Benedict called 'cultural discontinuity' when moving from a dependent to an independent role. For example, in the context of the transition from childhood to adult roles, 'the individual conditioned to one set of behaviours in childhood must adopt the opposite as an adult' (9). In such circumstances, therefore, it is not just a question of learning new behaviour but of 'unlearning' old behaviour - a process likely to involve a degree of conflict, or at least a process of re-learning which needs to be taken into account when supporting disabled students.

Students either simply reported 'independent learning/learner' as a problem *per se* or expressed the same sentiment in a variety of ways:

'tutors have less time to consider needs of students'
'managing own time and work load'
'sink or swim - more personal support needed'
'need individualised help'
'more help needed towards the individual and their needs'
'tutors not as readily available as in college'

A small minority of students welcomed the 'independence': 'no one checking up on me' - 'doing ones' own thing', but on the whole disabled students saw the requirements of independent learning as a real challenge.

When students were asked to comment on the 'strong points/major achievements' in the semester, the vast majority of the responses were related to academic performance and 'competing' with non-disabled students:

'getting good grades'.
'passing units/making new friends'.
'academic success/integration with other students'.
'keeping up with non-disabled students'.
'getting good marks and meeting new friends'.
'passing semester one'.
'making friends/working in groups'.

Disabled Student Support

The aim then is to respond to these expressed needs and to develop a 'support service' which acknowledges notions of 'continuity and discontinuity' and which, whilst respecting the basic tenets of the Social Model of Disability, takes into account each individual student's *perception* of their impairment and level of need.

1 Recruitment and Admission - Keeping in Touch

All applications from disabled students are monitored, relevant information is sent, and, where appropriate a student is invited to meet the Disabled Student Support Team to discuss any specific requirements for support. The needs identified are recorded in order to inform the next stage of the process - an 'Assessment of Need'.

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2 Assessment of Need

The Assessment of Need is a detailed discussion and analysis of the support requirements of the student together with recommendations for support. This is done in our capacity as an accredited Access Centre and these are written up into a 'Student Profile' and 'Learning Contract'. The Learning Contract is intended to provide a sense of security to the student in that they know what level and type of support they can expect and remains in place for the duration of the student's course.

There are a number of elements to the process:

A Previous Learning Experience

This involves a detailed consideration of previous study strategies, learning experiences or assessment arrangements and provides the opportunity to maximise the student's continuity of experience.

B The Effect of Disability on Learning

This provides an opportunity to explore the student's perception of their impairment and how it impacts on their study. This enables us to identify those barriers which may impede the learning process.

C Study Strategy Requirements

Looking at the impact of the student's impairment, and its interaction with the learning environment, specific recommendations are made as to what is necessary for the student to successfully complete his/her course and to ensure that they are not disadvantaged. These fall into three major categories.

1. Specialist technology - students are given the opportunity to trial equipment and software;
2. Learning environment - including special examination arrangements, the appointment of learner support workers and staff awareness sessions;
3. Learner Support - through a study skills programme or 'disability-specific' learner support sessions.

Conclusion

In the context of higher education in the UK today disabled student support has to be based on the premise of 'Independence with Support'. We have to remove barriers to learning but we also have to recognise that the student's perception of their impairment and their personal situation will be an important influence on their 'competency motivation'. Their 'perception of the situation' is as much a disabling barrier as are environmental ones and perhaps less easy to dismantle.

We need to prepare students for the transition to HE by providing early and detailed information about what support is available in order to create a sense of 'being in control' as well as provide ongoing support which meets individual needs at the same time as encouraging independence and autonomy. The brief summary above is directed at beginning to achieve this.

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'Unlocking Potential': Accreditation For Socially Excluded Young People

Pat Davies and Julia Carter

Dr Pat Davies is Reader in Continuing Education at City University and has been involved in researching issues around access to education for socially excluded groups for many years. She has just completed a major research project on the impact of credit-based learning on learning cultures, which was part of the ESRC's Learning Society Programme. She has also recently directed evaluations of the implementation of accreditation in voluntary sector organisations and a project to test the National Open College system with groups of disadvantaged and disaffected young people.
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Abstract

The National Open College system of accreditation is well established in provision for adults, particularly in FE and AE institutions. It has however, not been systematically used in the same way with young people. This workshop reported on the evaluation1 of a project, 'Unlocking London's Potential', that attempted to test the arrangements with small voluntary sector projects and organisations which target disaffected and often alienated young people. A number of issues have been highlighted through this experience which present practitioners with dilemmas and challenges as well as possible solutions and support. These were presented as a basis for discussion of the policy and practice appropriate for working with socially excluded young people.

Introduction

Disaffected youth are, almost by definition, unlikely to be in formal education; in order to target them the DfEE (1996) stressed the importance of involving informal education providers such as the careers and probation services or voluntary sector agencies where considerable informal learning occurs.

In London under the auspices of the TECs, the Open College Network (LOCN) and the careers services, and with funding from the City Challenge Fund, a range of informal providers was brought together to explore the potential and limitations of the Entry level qualification, proposed by the government as a way of motivating disaffected young people. The group built upon units already developed within the National Open College for the Pre-Foundation Progression Award.

The two year Project, *Unlocking London's Potential* began in April 1997. It involved 12 organisations: five from the voluntary sector, four with a college link or base and three which were located in non-educational statutory bodies. At the time of evaluation total learner numbers were 120. The Project was operated by LOCN and managed by a Steering Group. The continued involvement of a wide ranging group of agencies including original partners, the inner London probation service, local colleges and national organisations was ensured through an Advisory Board and support for the practitioners was provided through the Practitioners' Group which met termly to exchange and share experience.

Summary of evaluation findings:

1. The target group, accreditation and learning

The project successfully targeted and worked with disaffected youth to support and encourage learning, enhance confidence and motivate learners to progress to further study.

OCN accreditation allowed practitioners to retain the flexibility and responsiveness which they regard as critical in attracting and motivating the target group.

> 'It gives structure but allows room to work on an individual basis with a young person on their needs and interests.' Practitioner

Practitioners and learners spoke positively about the benefits of learning.

> 'I can get up every day and look in the mirror and not be scared.' Learner

Most practitioners considered that credit was highly motivating for learning.

> 'They like the idea that they're going to achieve something and it gives them a focus... it gets them organised to take responsibility.' Practitioner

However, one felt that his learners were so disaffected as to be unmoved by qualifications.

> 'qualifications are not perceived as having anything to do with good jobs or money.' Practitioner

2. Entry level

Entry level offered an appropriate starting point for a return to learning for people with little confidence or achievement.

> 'everyone near enough understands each other...no one's better than the other.' Learner

Entry level was regarded by practitioners as an important safety net to prevent (a repetition of) failure but it was not regarded as a satisfactory qualification aim.

> 'I would definitely be disappointed if they achieved at Entry Level.' Practitioner

Practitioners stressed the importance of the inclusivity signalled by Entry level within the national qualifications framework but warned against it being used, within the colleges, as a means of lowering expectations of certain groups.

3. Qualifications, accreditation and assessment

Practitioners had joined the project because they recognised the increasing importance of qualifications for their clients, nevertheless many had had initial misgivings over assessment and its affect upon the flexibility of their programmes. Experience in the Project showed these fears to have been unfounded.

OCN assessment was welcomed on account of its diversity and unobtrusiveness. These elements were considered crucial to success with the target group and there were concerns that developments within the QCA might prevent the continuation of the OCN approach within the inclusivity of the Qualifications Framework.

Practitioners welcomed the attempts of the national Framework to address exclusion but suggested that they would be unwilling to meet QCA regulations if these threatened the essential features of their provision.

4. Widening participation - working across sectors

The local partnership involving TECs, the OCN and Careers Service proved particularly effective in involving agencies working with the target group to offer informal learning. In addition the project identified activity with the target group already taking place within, or under the auspices of, the colleges.

Practitioners therefore came from both the voluntary and statutory sectors and the Project provided an opportunity for collaborative development across sectors through the sharing and comparison of different professional cultures and ways of working. It is anticipated that this collaboration will continue in the interests of widening participation and inclusion.

The Project identified areas where LOCN procedures were inappropriate for non-statutory and non-educational agencies and need to be amended if involvement with the voluntary sector and the target group is to develop.

Points for discussion

There is a need to accept that accreditation may not be appropriate for all groups at all times and there may be sub-sets within the target group for whom it is inappropriate. Only the professionals in close contact with the young people are in a position to make that judgement. Such decisions are complicated by their implications for funding.

There is a tension between the flexibility necessary for successful work with these young people and the structure required for accreditation. In particular, accredited learning is usually based on the practice of a 'planned' programme of learning managed through tutorials, action plans, learning plans and so on. While socially excluded young people may need order and planning in their lives, it is unlikely to be the most effective starting point for working with them. Retrospection reflection on learning following a 'no-strings attached' involvement in some form of activity (spot, drama, music, finding accommodation ....) may be more effective with the most disaffected. However, this does not easily fit the funding model.

There is also a tension between the need for, on the one hand, the curriculum and assessment arrangements to be as flexible and close to the learners as possible in order to be relevant to their needs and on the other hand, the criteria emerging from the QCA which require greater externality, rigidity and standardisation.

The bureaucracy which surrounds formal accreditation and which underpins the quality arrangements is difficult to manage for small voluntary sector projects and organisations.

Notes

1. The evaluation was funded partly by the local TEC, Focus Central London, and partly by the ESRC Learning Society Programme.

Ethnic Minority Staff in Higher Education

Professor Geoff Chivers

Geoff Chivers is Professor of Continuing Education at the University of Sheffield. His research and teaching interests are wide-ranging but have always included an emphasis on equal opportunities in higher education and continuing education. While this work has previously focused primarily on issues of social class and gender, and a longstanding awareness of the need to move forward in regard to the lack of progression of some ethnic minorities, this has been heightened by working closely with a small number of black staff and students in Sheffield. Geoff is heavily involved with research into CPD and CVE, and in developing adult educators and trainers; and HE staff to undertake CE work. He is also much concerned with management development in the educational context, and the voluntary sector. He has led and supported a large number of EU projects in these fields and is currently the co-ordinator of the CPD group of ESREA.

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Abstract

This paper reports the preliminary findings of a study funded by the Leverhulme Trust into the involvement of ethnic minorities as staff of higher education institutions. While relevant data is scanty, it is clear that there are few black or Asian staff in higher positions in UK universities, and it is believed that ethnic minorities are under-represented at every level and in all roles in HE. While this under-representation is a general malaise, it has particular bearing in regard to continuing education in HE given the stress on mature entry as a way into University for ethnic minority students.

The Study is investigating barriers to staff positions, problems faced in post, and reasons for leaving posts in regard to ethnic minority staff, and aims to identify good practice and generate recommendations for institutional policy.

Introduction

When I submitted my abstract for this paper to the UAce Conference Committee I had no idea that the issue of under-representation of ethnic minorities amongst the staff of UK universities was soon to feature so strongly in the educational press.

The issue has caused me concern for many years, along of course with the under-representation of certain ethnic minorities - particularly of UK birth - amongst the student body in HE, especially in the older and more prestigious universities. Clearly, there is a direct relationship between the two issues, since if we fail to recruit and sustain university students from our ethnic minorities we will not have a pool from which to draw academic, or indeed administrative staff later (except from overseas).

I do not want to dwell too long on the issue of under-representation of ethnic minorities in the student body, since this is being covered in another paper at this conference. I am sure that from all of my research on women's under-representation in physical sciences, technologies and engineering that it is much easier to recruit categories of students into study programmes where they are under-represented if there are *staff*, teaching and administrative from that category leading the study programme. Students' experiences within the study programme will generally be more positive and they can recognise themselves amongst the staff body (in terms of age and gender as well as ethnicity).

The quantitative picture

Until very recently there were no statistics for the percentage of ethnic minority students or staff in higher education. However, the Higher Education Statistics Agency does now collect basic data on ethnicity which provides some quantitative evidence.

The basic HESA data does not distinguish between ethnic minority students or staff of UK birth and those recruited from overseas. This should be borne in mind when considering the data. All higher education data should be set against the national census data that at 1996-97 some 6% of the UK population was 'non-white'. Non-white includes people of mixed race (Brindle, 1999).

According to the latest HESA data ethnic minority young people are twice as likely as their white counterparts to enter university, and are most strongly represented in two of the most oversubscribed subjects, law and medicine. Ethnic minority students are more likely to go to the less prestigious new universities. Given the research track required to enter academic roles today, and the lower base of research in new universities this is one indicator of the reason for so few ethnic minority academic staff in universities as yet.

Within the category 'non-white' there is much complexity, with Pakistani males twice as likely to enter university than white males, while the two most under-represented groups are Afro-Caribbean males and Bangladeshi females. I have a feeling that variation between ethnic minority groups in terms of their entry into university has much to do with social class and with gender role expectations. In this case I would expect that one of the most effective ways of increasing representation of some minorities would be through special attention within the continuing education context, just as we have done for white working class males and women returners for many years. There is evidence that a greater proportion of ethnic minority students and students from lower socio-economic groups enter HE from mature access courses than from the 'mainstream' routes.

HESA data has also revealed that there are differences between ethnic minorities in regard to the take up of postgraduate studies. (THES, 5 March 1999, p. 3) Afro-Caribbean graduates who opt for some kind of postgraduate study within HE tend to opt for taught courses, with only 8% registering for research degrees. In contrast 28% of Chinese postgraduates are taking research degrees. Again, this must be important in considering why there are so few black academics in UK universities.

According to Tariq Modood of Bristol University there are 6% of academic staff in British Universities who are not white. While this is in line with the percentage of ethnic minorities in the British population, fully half are from overseas. The latter are mostly post-doctoral, short-term contract researchers, and should be discounted for our purposes (THES, 5 March 1999, p. 21). His data drawn from HESA returns show that academics are concentrated in the lower grades with 4% of junior researchers, 3.5% of lecturers, 2.3% of senior lecturers and 1.22% of professors being non-white. There are evidently 120 non-white professors and 8,478 white professors in UK universities. The proportion of senior ethnic minority academic staff recruited from overseas is not reported but may well be higher than 50 percent in my view. If this is the case there may be less than 60 non white professors in the UK who were either born, or at least undertook their secondary schooling in the UK. There are evidently no black vice-chancellors or registrars.

Is there a problem?

One of the fundamental problems I have identified over many years in regard to under-representation of a particular gender, class or ethnic group in an occupation is in getting those close to the issue to recognise that there is a problem. This is an aspect of cultural expectations, or situations which are 'taken for granted'. Engineers are male, nurses are female, truck drivers and window cleaners will have regional accents, teachers are white - what's the problem?

Roger Ballard in correspondence in *THES* (12 March 1999, p. 15) writes that 'The under-representation of non-white academics in British Universities is little short of a scandal.' He goes on at length to castigate the almost wholly European base of the higher education curriculum, which he sees as a fundamental reason for the lack of engagement of ethnic minorities with higher education studies and careers. However true this may be, I do not see this situation changing until we have an increase in ethnic minority staff in higher education. I see a close analogy with the rise of women within higher education and the introduction of women's studies programmes, and increased efforts to 'feminise' the HE curriculum.

Sir William McPherson has suggested that 'institutional racism should be seen as the collective failure of an organisation to provide appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic group.' This definition is unsatisfactory because it does not include consideration of the involvement of ethnic minorities in *providing* the service to any clients. It continues to place the 'non-white' in the position of supplicant, and it is *this* 'taken for granted' that we most need to overcome.

To give a simple example, it is typical to see students who do not have mother tongue English as *weaker* students because their English, especially their written English, is considered unsatisfactory. However the *vast majority* of white academics making this judgement have no experience of studying their discipline and writing assessed assignments or dissertations in *their* second language (if they have one!). Clearly, in pure scholarship terms any students writing at a high level in their second language are achieving enormous success, even if there are a few English errors on each page!

Being assessed in their second language is a huge disadvantage for any student, and this affects the academic achievement of many ethnic minority students at every stage in the educational process. English is considered to be one of the hardest European languages to read and write (one in five adults in the UK cannot use Yellow Pages to find a plumber), and this is too easily overlooked by white academics.

Some extreme cases of institutional racism have been widely publicised. A Commission for Racial Equality report on St. George's Hospital medical school in 1987 revealed that black and Asian applicants were systematically discriminated against in admissions procedures. More recently Manchester University medical school was found to be failing a disproportionate number of Asian students. While there was no difference in the marks for their final papers, discrepancies lay in the clinical assessment, based on subjective criteria, and carried out entirely by white doctors (Wallace, 1999, p. 21).

Simon Holdaway, Professor of Sociology at my own University argues that there is an absence of qualitative data covering the day-to-day experiences of racism as reported by the ethnic minority staff and students affected. He further argues that 'this lack of knowledge about the way in which race is affecting universities is symptomatic of the institutional racism it might expose.' (Wallace, 1999, p. 21)

A report from the School of Health Studies, Bradford University (Dar, 1999 as reported in *THES*, March 5, 199) has begun to close the gap. The study involved interviews with 28 Asian students (amongst other stakeholders), who reported that their lecturers failed to challenge racist attitudes and statements amongst the general student body. They also stated that the lecturers' lack of knowledge and awareness of Asian cultures caused them problems, and often upset and discouraged Asian students from pursuing careers in nursing and other health related jobs.

The nurse education field may present particular challenges for anti-racist practices. The Royal College of Nursing senior staff were clearly shocked by the row at their recent conference concerning more support for ethnic minorities in nursing. Statistics clearly show black staff becoming trapped on lower grades, working nights much more than white nurses, and being excluded from specialist areas of practice. The RCN Congress voted by 55% to *reject* a call to promote activities aimed at involving and progressing ethnic minorities. Senior staff of the RCN, one of Britain's biggest trade unions, with 340,000 members have had to admit that their union is clearly racist!

In the absence of qualitative UK data on the experiences of black academic staff, I have turned to the USA for information and ideas on the way forward in terms of intervention strategies. Despite all of the efforts now made to promote black students, there are still serious problems to be faced by black academics. Alfred (1999) writes of the alienation, isolation and social marginalisation that black staff experience in predominantly white institutions.
In considering career orientations American researchers are heavily influenced by the work of Schein (1978) who found that people form a strong self-concept that holds their 'internal' career

together even as they experience problems and changes in their external career. The 'internal' career relates to a strong self-concept of career that is based on 'career anchors'. According to Schein (1993), a person's career anchors derive from:

- self perceived talents;
- basic values;
- the evolved sense of motives and needs as they pertain to a career

Once the self-concept is formed it functions as a stabilising force, hence the metaphor of an 'anchor'. This can be thought of as the values and motives that the person will not give up if forced to make a choice.

Normally there will be a certain degree of congruence between the internal career and the external career. The problem for black academics, and aspiring academics, is then seen as the lack of congruence between the internal career of being a black person aspiring to professional life, and the very different external career requirements and expectations of academics set by the dominant white community.

A very recent study by Mary Alfred (1999) of five black American women academics in a white dominated research university investigated:

- How do black women's early developmental experiences in the black subculture and in the white dominant societal culture influence their professional development?
- How do black tenured female faculty interpret their experiences in the white dominated culture of the research academy?
- What adaptive strategies do the black female faculty employ to manage the white academic culture?

The study results indicate that participants found success in the white culture through:

a. positive self-definition in creating positive images and rejecting society's stereotypical images of themselves as black women;
b. safe space: this is a place and a group where the black female academic can do and say as she pleases - typically in the presence of other black people, where wounds inflicted by the racist organisation and society can be healed;
c. knowledge of the academic culture and its role expectations;
d. visibility promoted by mentors and through participation in professional organisations;
e. a fluid life structure which allows black women academics to float in and out of various cultural and socio-economic life worlds.

Typically these women are living in *two* (or more) social worlds which are hardly connected in any way except through their professional work, which may be conducted partly within the institution, partly at home in the midst of family life, and partly in the community or communities where they engage as professionals. Academics from poor working class backgrounds often operate in a similar way, and become used to changing their appearance, language, demeanour and even diet depending on which world they are currently inhabiting.

The power of self-definition was found in this study to be especially important. The years of struggle from slavery to the Civil Rights movement and beyond until today has certainly imbued many black Americans with great pride in their achievements, the ability to shrug off racism with contempt, and the view that they may look different but they certainly are the equal of whites, albeit different in appearance and values.

The internal career for these black women is represented by:

a. their positive self definition firmly anchored in cultural identity which they never give up;
b. their finding of a safe space where they can reclaim any aspects of the constructed self which, by perception, may have been threatened as a result of their interactional experiences;
c. their fluid life structure and bi-cultural competency which allows them to successfully navigate their bi-cultural worlds, and meet the expectations of both worlds.

Their external career is facilitated by:

a. their knowledge of academic culture and its expectations;
b. their socialisation into the academic culture, which was facilitated by their mentoring relationships with significant members of this culture;
c. visibility within the academic profession.

Barriers to advancement in careers

The above study gives some pointers towards intervention strategies which could be introduced to improve the situation.

Jean McFarland (1999) has reviewed the literature concerning barriers to professional career advancement in the USA, and identifies the following internal barriers for non-whites:

- role conflict;
- lack of confidence;
- lack of organisational 'savvy';
- ineffective communication skills;
- insufficient education;
- inappropriate focus on issues of race and culture;
- hypersensitivity to these issues.

External barriers were considered, however, to be much more significant:

- lack of commitment to and enforcement of race-equity policies;
- lack of access to informal networks;
- stereotyping by whites;
- lack of role models;
- lack of mentors and sponsors;
- tokenism;
- lack of opportunities for role preparation.

Black women report further gender specific internal and external barriers, ranging from limited career aspirations to family commitments.

McFarland's own study of black males and females, and white females, in regard to their barriers in attempting to move to leadership positions in the vocational education field bears out these earlier findings.

For non-white males by far the greatest barrier is seen as racial discrimination, followed by the lack of a networking system open to them, too few openings, cultural discrimination, too few role models, and lack of an influential mentor.

For non-white females the list of barriers was longer, and the order different, with the lack of a networking system and racial discrimination placed equally most problematic, followed by too few openings, lack of mobility, family responsibility, age discrimination, cultural discrimination, conflict with spouse's career and too few role models. Not surprisingly non-white females list numerous internal barriers which are discounted by non-white males, such as lack of self-confidence, fear of success and lack of assertiveness.

However, it is encouraging that the external barriers are cited as most significant by both genders, since it is these that organisations can directly address by overt measures.

The study conducted by telephone interview asked for suggestions for advancing women and non-whites into leadership roles. The paper assumes that work organisations have a human resource development function (which is debatable for many UK universities which usually have little more than a training unit).

Nevertheless the results of this questioning are illustrative:

- Provide cultural diversity/equity training for administrators and staff. (in exact coincidence with the Bradford University study);
- Provide administrative support that encourages mentoring;
- Provide grooming for leadership roles;
- Encourage support systems;
- Provide role models;
- Provide opportunities to demonstrate skills;
- Encourage networking;
- Implement leadership development programmes;
- Actively recruit and provide job information;
- Get rid of the 'good old boys' network;
- Encourage hard work;

In terms of internal barriers, potential leaders amongst women and non-whites are advised to:

- Seek opportunities to show your talents;
- Develop self-confidence;
- Participate in internships;
- Be assertive, not aggressive;
- Seek additional education in your field;
- Develop a good résumé (CV).

Of all these suggestions, the administration's scope to create networks of employees is particularly stressed as valuable, in promoting self-image, improving communications over common problems and how to overcome these, and offering a more powerful voice with which to speak to university leaders.

It is important to recognise that the UK is not the USA, and the complex of issues to be addressed here is not the same complex as in the USA. Nevertheless, the underlying concepts are similar. Certainly there are external barriers to be addressed largely by institutions, and internal barriers to be addressed by individuals, groups and institutions. Henri Taifel (1982) in discussing the social psychology of minorities outlines the various ways in which minorities attempt to cope with their situation. In brief these are:

a. to attempt to 'pass' as a member of the majority group. This is difficult for most of Britain's immigrants, but could be an option for second or third generation mixed race people of light skin;
b. to accept all of the values of the majority, and to aim to become 'one of us', albeit with a different appearance;
c. to retain one's own values and battle alone for acceptance;
d. to close ranks with others of the same or related minorities and battle for acceptance of difference on a *group* basis.

Option (a) is open only to small numbers in British minority groups, and often generates deep anxieties and long term psychological stress.

Option (b) is non-problematic if the person concerned *has* the same values as the majority group, and is fully accepted by the majority for this reason. This is increasingly the case for minorities born in the UK who are brought up as British. However, if their *appearance* is different they may still face racial discrimination, overt or covert.

Option (c) can succeed if the individual is very confident, very determined and very thick skinned. However, less confident and less powerful individuals can be deeply damaged by trying to go it alone. They can become very alienated, and then begin to exhibit behaviour which is disturbing to the majority group, and is likely to reinforce racial prejudice (British prisons and psychiatric wards have far more black inmates than would have been expected on the basis of numbers in the population).

Option (d) can bring many advantages, provided the movement towards 'equal but different' does not threaten the majority group, generate feelings of racial superiority in the minority group, or cause individuals in the minority group to become unable to act independently.

The university world is one which stresses individual effort and achievement over group endeavour, especially for academics. In trying to fit into the academic culture, it is all too easy for the minority staff member to try to 'go it alone' and suffer the consequences. It is clear from the longer American experience that *team* and *group* efforts can play a very important role in supporting minority staff in the workplace as well as in the community. Provided the 'safe place' need is well recognised, there is all to be said for involving supportive majority group members in these teams and groups. Clearly where there are no black senior academics there can be no black mentors for budding professors (although other black leaders could play a role here). White mentors are not out of the question, but these partnerships must grow naturally with institution encouragement, and not be 'decreed'.

It is extremely important that the institution is seen to be actively involved in initiating and supporting networks for academic and administrative staff minorities (as student unions do for student societies based on national or ethnic groupings). Otherwise minority staff may well be nervous to raise their profile by organising in this way.

Of course there is the danger for white academics, especially those with some power, to be seen as patronising, indeed to be patronising. However, any 'black-white' relationships within which such matters cannot be discussed are worthless, and each side must trust the other sufficiently to raise such issues and work them out together. There has to be at least an equal effort by white mentors, advisors and supporters to understand the relevant minority community as the minority staff member is expected to make to understand the academic world, etc. This is time consuming but a rewarding cultural, learning, and often emotional experience, which helps the minority colleague(s) in reducing suspicions about what is going on within his or her family and friendship circles.

Where does this leave concerned university staff in the UK?

THES 19 March, 1999 (p. 2) reported that the Association of Colleges, the Further Education Funding Council and the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education agreed at a conference earlier that week to set up a commission to examine ways to encourage more black teachers into further education.

I see this as a very positive step and would like to use this opportunity to urge UAce to promote the same step amongst the equivalent university level organisations. I believe the continuing education fraternity has an historic, ongoing responsibility to fight for the academically disadvantaged at every level. Policy is a weak tool without strong links to practice. We know a great deal about organising, networking, mentoring and sponsoring and it is time for us to act.

We do need to be clear that the effort to increase the number of non-white academic and administrative staff, born in the UK or brought up here, will need to be serious and prolonged. I am *not* advocating the type of affirmative action which results in non-whites taking on university posts that they cannot cope with, to their detriment and to the detriment of the credibility of anti-racist interventions.

At the same time, there must be scope for non-whites to define what it is to be a black or Asian academic, and not to have to copy in every respect the way in which white, male, middle class academics have defined the role. I am sure that the effort will be very worthwhile. The diversity which our British ethnic minorities have brought to every field of endeavour where they have been allowed to prosper has hugely enriched our society, and my own life.

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The Experience of Older Learners and the Influence of Context

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Tilda Gaskell (Professional Diploma in Post Compulsory Education; MA in Education) is a PhD student at the University of Dundee and is working on a research project which considers the experience of older learners in a variety of learning contexts. The project has financial backing from Help the Aged. A paper relating to the pilot phase of the research has been published in the conference proceedings of the Scottish Educational Research Association (September 1998). She has worked in Community Education for the past ten years with responsibility for rural adult education in the Oban area of Argyll including the Adult Basic Education service. Over the last two years this work has been in rural Angus as development worker for older people and Adult Basic Education volunteer co-ordinator. In addition Tilda is an Associate Lecturer with The Open University in Scotland, tutoring within the School of Health and Social Welfare.

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Abstract

In Britain, the current demographic redistribution is resulting in a progressively ageing population. The percentage of people over fifty will shortly exceed those under thirty. The current government policy relating to lifelong learning privileges younger learners at the expense of those in the post work phase and, should this continue, a quarter of the population may be excluded from the much vaunted learning society. This workshop will consider the effect of context on the process and experience of learning. Discussion will focus on the influence of socio-economic forces on age-cohorts of differing social class and gender. In particular it will seek to clarify the effects of educational policy on the initial experience and current expectations of learning amongst specific cohorts of older learners. The discussion will be informed by a recent pilot study undertaken as part of ongoing research based in an East of Scotland city and the surrounding rural area.

Introduction

In Britain the current demographic redistribution is resulting in an increasingly ageing population and this trend is reflected throughout the world as birth rates continue to fall and advances in social conditions and medical science have combined to increase average life expectancy. In Britain average life expectancy has increased by about 10 years over the last 30 years. Within an ageing society an increasingly large proportion of the population will be adult, and over time this proportion will consist of proportionately larger numbers of old and very old individuals. By the turn of the century it is estimated that, in the European Union, those over 50 will outnumber those under 30. This will result, by the year 2020, in more than a quarter of the population being over the age of 60. At the same time the percentage of those over 80 is predicted to rise to 30% which is almost double the figure reported in 1993 (Eurostat Year Book 1994: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys 1991, World Health Organisation 1998). This rapid increase is a phenomenon of the current century and contrasts starkly with population figures for the seventeenth century which show an virtually static older population, with those over 60 representing between 5-7% of the population, up until the early twentieth century (Thompson, 1993).

In modern societies social policy is implemented to respond to the perceived needs of a given society. This response will reflect both political and public opinion and also the prevailing economic climate (Lawson and Silver, 1985). Educational policy tends to exemplify this link between learning and the role of the individual within society and society can be said to seek to reproduce particular values through its education system (Kogan, 1985). In this sense a primary purpose of initial education is the socialisation of new members of society; to produce in Adam Smith's words a 'more decent and orderly' community. Current social and economic priorities have resulted in the policy, or series of policies that have been described as lifelong learning. These policies largely reflect the labour market and the continual need to produce and maintain a workforce that is responsive to change and prepared to accept periods of unemployment and retraining. However, whereas the demographic redistribution described above shows a continuing trend towards an older population, 'paradoxically, the focus of education and training provision has been mainly on the young, and has been accompanied by what amounts to a denial of the real need for learning to be for a longer lifetime' (Carlton and Soulsby, 1999, p. 10).

Amongst the proportion of the population described as 'older' there will be considerable diversity of experience, age and also several distinct cohorts. Cohorts may be described as groupings of people of the same chronological age who also share other characteristics that represent common experience. Laslett (1996) suggests that this common experience of 'time-space' allows for communication to occur between members of cohorts in ways which exceed those found between cohorts. This implies that the differences between older and younger people may be influenced to a greater extent by cohort than by age as personality develops throughout life in response to cultural, social and historical events which shape and define experience. Thus cohort can be seen as representing the gestalt of a period and in this context it has been noted that people may have a collective generational self image (Twining, 1990, Turner, 1995). Bergeman (1997) argues that difference between individuals increases with age as the life course progresses and each person becomes more unique in response to experience. She suggests that to ignore the variability within a given age cohort of older people is to distort conceptual understanding of ageing. However, in terms of educational policy cohorts will have had a common experience of initial education and this may be expected to have an effect on individual responses to education throughout the life experience of that cohort.

The twentieth century has seen a gradual increase in the quantity and length of school based education. Since the education act of 1902, which saw the establishment of Local Education Authorities, grant aided secondary schools and the free place system, successive governments have given support to expanding the variety and quantity of educational opportunity. Progress has been halting at times and political will has not always been matched by legislation. Barber (1994) suggests that the Church of England and the Roman Catholics had 'vested interests' in maintaining their strong position within the education system and 'successfully resisted any

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attempts to extend state control over their schools' during the inter war years (Barber, 1994 p. 2). He further argues that the agricultural lobby also strongly influenced the government against raising the school leaving age. During the years up to 1939 the majority of children attended elementary and then senior elementary schools for the compulsory period of 5 to 14 years of age, and in a large number of these schools class sizes of as many as 50 were common. A small minority of middle and upper class children attended day grammar schools or boarding (public) school. In 1926 a Labour Party policy document and the associated Haddow report entitled 'Secondary Education for All' proposed that schooling should be carried out in two stages in order to foster the natural developmental changes occurring at adolescence. It was planned that in addition to grammar schools, there would be both selective and non selective secondary schools which would educate all children between 11 and 16 years of age. Reform was slow, and it was not until the 1936 Education Act that the school leaving age was raised to 15, to be implemented in 1939. However, due to the prevailing social and economic circumstances, and in 1939 the outbreak of the Second World war, the school leaving age was not in fact raised to 15 until 1948; eventually rising to 16 in 1972 (Lawson and Silver, 1985). Nonetheless the war years brought about the social change that was necessary to provide the impetus for the enactment of the 1944 Education Act. This had resulted partly through the mixing of social classes and changes in the gendered division of labour and partly through the social effects of the mass evacuation of urban children, which exposed the extent of poverty and deprivation existing in the inner cities (Barber, 1994).

The percentage of those remaining at school beyond the school leaving age of 14 continued to be small up to and beyond World War Two with even fewer staying on during the war years and those immediately after. Of people now aged 75 or over 45% had left school by the age of 14, and a further 13% left at 15 years of age, making a total of 58% leaving at 15 or under.. People now aged 65-74 became 14 just before, or during World War Two, and 60% had left school by the age of 14, with a further 10% leaving at 15, meaning that 70% of this group had left school by the time they were 15 years old. These percentages represent the percentage of early school leavers amongst the surviving cohort and percentages nearer to 80% during the depression of the late 1920s and 1930s up to and including the war years may be more accurate. After the war staying on rates regained their pre-war average fairly quickly and have risen steadily ever since. Post-school qualifications show a similar pattern with 50% of those aged 75 and over having no post-school qualifications compared with 54% of the cohort whose education was interrupted by war. As with school leaving rates the percentages quickly regained pre-war levels and have continued to rise (Carlton and Soulsby, 1999, Barber 1994). Setting these figures in context it is evident that availability and type of employment has an effect on 'school leaving age and also post school qualification levels. In times of full employment or war staying on at school or gaining post school qualifications provides no particular advantage. In addition prior to 1944 and the inception of the Welfare State financial support for low income families was not available and family circumstances made it necessary for many young people to contribute to household incomes as soon as possible. In contrast the current post-industrial economy requires a smaller and more specialised workforce and social policy has provided a safety net for the poorest families. As a consequence there is no advantage to the individual, the family or the state to be had from leaving school early and political rhetoric has demanded ever-increasing levels of participation in post school education. In this sense social and educational policy can be seen to be responsive to the economic climate in combination with political and public opinion (see above).

Individuals continue to develop and change throughout the life course (Bergeman, 1997, Erikson, 1982) and these changes will to some extent be influenced by current social policy including educational policy. It is interesting to note that between 1990 and 1996 participation rates in adult education, although still low, rose amongst older learners who are no longer part of the workforce. This modest increase was more marked amongst people over 55 than in any age group other than those aged 16-19. Current participation rates amongst those aged 55-64 are 25%, and 18% amongst those over the age of 65 (Sargant 1997). This small rise in older learners is perhaps surprising, given that government policy for lifetime learning relates to levels of qualification within the workforce underpinning the overall aim of raising levels of 'international competitiveness' (Sargant, 1997). The answer may lie with the ageist rhetoric of youth culture which demands that in order to continue to operate within mainstream culture all must aspire to an image of continuous youthful renewal (Featherstone and Hepworth, 1993). In this context continuing learning may be seen as re-creation in its true sense allowing older people to participate on equal terms within a society that marginalises age and those who are not seen as productive. Thus, in a consumer culture where learning is a commodity, the sale of learning may be seen, perhaps, as the sale of youthful renewal. It is noteable that computer studies hold particular attraction for older learners who come second only to those in 'mid career' (35-44 years of age) in percentage terms amongst adults choosing this subject (Sargant, 1997).

Contexts for learning are various and represent different experiences of the learning process. Classification is difficult as terminology tends to be loose. However, broadly speaking learning opportunities for adults may be categorised as formal or informal; within these broad categories a number of sub categories can be seen to operate. Formal education is generally defined as structured and occurring within the organisational (although not necessarily physical) boundaries of an institution such as a college, school or university, or through an agency such as a local education authority. It may also be said to occur in work based training and other forms of accredited vocational training. Informal learning has less clear boundaries and may be said to include independent and experiential learning taking place outside the formally structured education system. It may include a variety of strategies for developing the learning or knowledge being soaght; for instance use of libraries, the media and / or more knowledgeable others (Sargant, 1990, Percy, Burton and Withnall 1994). Schuller and Bostyn define this type of informal learning as 'systematically following up a particular interest' (Schuller and Bostyn, 1993 p. 56). Informal learning may also be said to occur within clubs, associations and voluntary organisations (Percy *et al.* 1994). Co-operative, or self-help learning groups provide an interesting bridge between formal and informal learning, in that the learning is defined, organised and provided by the learners themselves. Within such groups, however, it is possible for learners to attend as participants only, having chosen to do so for reasons similar to those given by participants in formal learning (Walker, 1998).

A recent small scale pilot study considered the effects of learning context on the process and experience of learning amongst older learners. Older learners were defined as those aged 55 or over and the study took place in an East of Scotland city and its surrounding rural area. A total of 24 people in 3 contexts were involved in the study. The contexts were a self-help or co-operative learning group (represented by a U3A conversational French group based in the city), a formal education group (represented by a Further Education College outreach drop-in computing class) and a group of older people who chose not to take part in group learning (this group were residents of a sheltered housing complex in a rural town). This sample of older adults was asked to complete a questionnaire which provided base line information for the study.

Results from the questionnaire showed a marked difference in age profile in each group. The formal education group returned the youngest profile, with 4 out of 5 aged between 55 and 65 years of age. In the self help group the majority (7 out of 13) were between 66 and 70 years. In the non-participant group 5 out of 6 were over 76 and 3 of these were over 80 years old. School leaving age showed 14 out of 24 leaving at 15 or less; of these 12 were taking part in learning groups. Social class was classified according to pre-retirement occupation. Results showed that 13 out of 24 belonged to social class C2 or D; of these 10 were taking part in learning groups. The majority of the sample were female (17 out of 24); in the self help group 10 out of 13 were female and in the formal education group females represented 2 out of a total of 5.

The relatively high proportions of participants who were women, and/or in social classes C2 and D and who had left school at an early age is unrepresentative of previously reported adult education findings (Sargant, 1991, 1997; Schuller and Bostyn, 1993). These findings suggest that between 40% and 50% of people in social classes C2 and D have not taken part in learning since leaving school. Current participation in learning activities by people in these social classes is put at 12% and 17% respectively (Sargant, 1997). School leaving age acts in part as an indicator of social class, although as noted above, in older age groups a majority of the population left school at an early age. However, participation in adult learning tends to be lower amongst those who have experienced less initial education (Sargant, 1991, 1997). Women also tend to be underrepresented in adult learning generally, although this is not the case amongst older learners (Schuller and Bostyn, 1993).

Through the use of semi-structured interviews, a small focus group and observation a more detailed picture of the sample emerged which provided some additional information about the motivation and experience of learning amongst both the participant and the non participant groups. Differences were apparent between the contexts but it was clear that learning was part of the lives of all those in the sample whether or not they were currently taking part in group learning activities. The influence of initial education was evident in the expectations that people had about the learning process and the learner-teacher transaction. This was particularly marked in the responses of the youngest interviewee. This woman had had her entire education in the years immediately following the 1944 Education Act and during the 1950's when a liberal view of education was expanding at a time of economic growth. Her memories of school were of an atmosphere of 'learning for its own sake ... it was wonderful.' In contrast a man of 68 commented that 'because of the war and being evacuated my schooling was very much neglected. I perhaps was as much to blame by not being interested - so between 10 and 14 years old I did not learn much.' The story was slightly different for a man of 74 who had been 'very glad to commence work at 15' not least because to have stayed on would have incurred expense to his family. Even if he had won a scholarship this would have been the case as he would have continued to be dependent. The fact that education beyond the statutory leaving age of 14 was not free had influenced the experience and attitudes of several of the sample. Hopes and aspirations had been dashed for 3 of the older (over 80 years) women who had had to leave school in order to contribute to the family income because their mothers were widows; this would have been between 1926 and 1932. These women had wanted to qualify as teachers or, in one case nursing, but had worked in shops, factories and hotels or gone into domestic service. One of them had gone to commercial college in the evenings and later worked for the civil service; all of them had continued their love of learning and had passed this on to others through informal teaching of one kind and another. Younger women in the sample had also found that expectations that they would take on domestic responsibilities in addition to paid work had meant that further education and training had not been available to them. The experience of the men appeared to be different, and this perhaps reflects the division of labour on the basis of gender and the availability of trade apprenticeships, and later National Service, which meant that these men had all gone from school into a recognised training of some kind. None of the men in the expressed regret at leaving school, and none had remained beyond the statutory leaving age.

Social class divisions were noticeably blurred by retirement, this was evident in all contexts. A self-help group member defined this effect - 'no matter what you have done in your working life we are now all retired people' (male aged 68). This effect may account for the high participation rate amongst non-traditional learners. The effect may also relate to the way that courses and groups are advertised, the level of fees, the timing of classes and geographical location (see below).

Motivation for becoming involved in learning as older adults varied between the contexts and between genders. The younger cohort was more inclined to suggest instrumental reasons whereas the oldest in all contexts cited the importance of continued intellectual activity. It was implied that continued learning was essential for retaining an active mind in older age, and that learning was a central part of life for these people. This included those who were not participating in learning groups. These non-participants were all actively engaged in learning in a number of informal ways. For instance one woman was researching into the history of the Amish people in response to discussions she had had with the local minister about the Pauline Scriptures; another was learning a new form of hand work technique suitable to her failing sight. The man in this group was working on understanding the engineering of a mechanical mobility aid that he was about to buy. The males in the formal and self help learning groups tended to suggest skills based instrumental reasons for learning, but in the self help group they also mentioned the value of learning for its own sake and the desire for mental stimulus. The women in the self-help group all suggested that interest in the subject, a desire for stimulus and curiosity combined with social needs were their primary aims; whereas those in the formal education group were very much skills orientated. One person in each of these groups had joined in part to overcome a period of grief or mental illness.

The reasons that people gave for becoming involved in learning also appeared to relate to their perceptions of the learning context; this was in some cases based on comparisons made between the chosen context and alternative adult learning provision. Those in the self help context mentioned the social aspects of the U3A which included a monthly social meeting of all members in addition to the weekly classes; the fact that the membership was all over 50 and that most were retired was also valued. A further positive feature for participants was the fact that all activities were held during the day. Participants felt that they were part of a democratic organisation and several suggested that because teaching and learning within the U3A are interchangeable roles that 'we're all equal here.' Observations showed that whilst a traditional method of delivery was used by the volunteer tutor the ethos of mutuality was supportive of both learners and tutor, and there was much general banter and humour. The impression was one of shared endeavour, described by one participant as 'camaraderie.' By no means all U3A members in this local branch actually taught in addition to learning, however there was no barrier to doing so and it was taken as read that tutors would also be learners; and also that learners and tutors together were wholly responsible for the organisation of the local branch. Members of this group made a number of references to the lack of pressure involved in this type of co-operative learning which they compared positively to both traditional evening class provision and the local university's continuing education department. It was felt that these types of provision were both hierarchical and stressful in that they emphasised the separateness and superiority of the tutor and the values of accreditation. In the words of a woman aged 78, describing the university continuing education department: 'they are very strict and they take exams and papers and they get results - 4 out of 5 - so that's a completely different kind of teaching... [but here] we are all relaxed... [the tutor] would never embarrass us.' One other advantage of the self-help method mentioned by several participants was that it was very low cost; people pay a small annual subscription and that entitles them to take part in as many activities as they choose. Evidently these very positive views reflect the opinions of people who were already committed to this particular form of learning and may not be representative of the experiences of all those involved in self-help learning groups.

Expectations amongst the formal education group related to outcome rather than process. Coming to the class would equip them with a desired skill. The class was organised on a drop-in basis and learners booked a 3 hour session from week to week up to a total of 40 hours in each block of tuition; people could come for more than one session a week if required; and all sessions were in the daytime. Participants did not always come to the same session and thus were likely to meet different people and different tutors over the duration of the 40-hour block. Participants valued the flexibility that this system offered and for some the tuition method of self-access worksheets backed by the tutor as expert advisor was a positive advantage. The advantages of this self-access system of learning were that the learners could go at there own pace and that the learning was highly structured allowing learners to 'whizz through the bits you know and take time over the bits you don't know' (woman aged 55). This system may allow diffident learners to work through problems without feeling intimidated by more confident others. However, several participants did mention problems both with the use of technical jargon in the worksheets and with the tuition method. A male participant aged 64 particularly mentioned the 'us and them' atmosphere and suggested that the tutor was 'more a supervisor than a teacher.' Combined with the unexplained jargon in the worksheets he suggested that 'half the students give up [because of lack of understanding of basic terms] and feel it's their own fault.' The access method resulted in there being little group cohesion or communication between staff and students but did allow people to attend and develop a desired skill in a way that suited them individually. Observations showed very little communication between the tutor and the learners or between learners. Learners worked largely in silence, seated at computers ranged round the walls of a small room. The tutor was clearly separate and the expert. It was noticeable that she did not join the group at the tea break but had coffee elsewhere. Learners could register for a SCOTVEC module if they wished to and assessment could be undertaken during normal sessions; however, none of the older learners appeared to be taking this option. Additional reasons for joining this class were the fees waiver system for retired people and for those on state benefits and the fact that it was held in an outreach centre that was local to the participants. This system appeared to be responsive to local expressed need but perhaps not to individual difference.

Those who chose not to participate in group learning were all undertaking learning projects as discussed above. All those interviewed had taken part in some form of group adult learning in the past. For some this had been quite extensive whereas for others it had consisted of going to 'lecture and talks' given by the church guild and WRI. Reasons for not taking part in group learning now were age related health and mobility problems. Several of the interviewees suggested that they would like to participate in groups if a range of educational activities were available within the sheltered housing complex. This was not the case for all, and the male (aged 78) in this group suggested that 'you begin to feel you've done as much [learning] as you need to... [and] should leave it to the younger folk', although in fact he was continually involved in complex learning projects. He was also fiercely independent and did not feel inclined to be part of an organised group. Observations of a social meeting showed lively conversations and continuing interest in current affairs especially as they related to historical events that were meaningful to the group. Expectations of group learning amongst the non-participants appeared to be of a traditional model of an informative and instructive series of lessons on academic subjects or craft skills delivered by expert tutors. However, this may be in part because the group had not been exposed to any alternative model.

These different expectations and attitudes to adult learning appeared to bear a relationship to learning styles developed in school. For instance the formal education student who liked the self-access system had been at school in the late fifties when child centred methods of self-responsibility were developing. In contrast several of the (older) members of the self help group, whilst they felt able to be part of the organisation of learning, were less positive about solo learning and wanted a structured delivery. These participants were likely to have attended schools with large classes and a hierarchical system delivering a standard curriculum. The school experience of the non-participant group was likely to have been similar. Williamson (1998) argues that formal education 'denies learners the means to develop critical understanding' (Williamson, 1998 p. 51) by fostering a hierarchical and subject orientated mode of teaching. He suggests an alternative vision of collaborative teaching through a process of dialogue involving the domains of feeling and emotion in the development of cognitive understanding.

If older learners are to be more fully involved in the culture of lifelong learning attention should be focussed on their specific skills and needs. Older learners bring experience and reflectivity to learning and these qualities should be valued and respected within an inclusive and non hierarchical culture of mutual learning and emancipatory exchange between teachers and learners. Learning of this kind could be truly lifelong in its contribution to social and cultural equality.

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Marginalised Voices: A Survey Of Current Practice In Widening Participation With Minority Ethnic Communities

Jill Ward and Anne Bellis

Abstract

This workshop evaluated research recently completed by members of UAce's Educational Equality Network. The research evaluated the effectiveness of the Higher Education Funding Council for Education's Widening Participation Projects. Through critical analysis and by grounding the work within current policy and practice, issues emerged which will be of interest to both practitioners and managers in Further and Higher Education. Furthermore the strengths and problems associated with conducting collaborative research of this kind were identified.

Rapporteur; Mick Brennan

[This paper is to be published by UAce as an occasional paper]

International debate: 'It Is Unrealistic To Suggest That Lifelong Learning Can Significantly Increase The Social Inclusion Of Ethnic Minority Groups'

Maggie Woodrow

Email: woodrom@westminster.ac.uk

Motion will be proposed by: A Mitchem, Joe Charlesworth

Against the motion will be: Mary Tupan-Wenno, Olav Aarna

Participants were invited to to an international debate on the implications of lifelong learning for minority ethnic groups. In the general euphoria about lifelong learning, the realities of its potential to combat social exclusion are seldom addressed. This workshop, in debate format, provided the opportunity to highlight the issues and gain a better understanding of what lifelong learning could mean for some.

The session was scheduled as follows:

15.15 - 15.45	debaters put the case for and against the motion
15.45 - 16.15	the debate is open to the floor
16.15 - 16.25	summing up by debaters
16.25 - 16.30	motion put to the vote

Chair: Maggie Woodrow, Director of the European Access Network

Dr Arnold Mitchem
Executive Director, Council for Opportunity in Education, Washington DC

Joe Charlesworth,
Commission for racial equality, London

Professor Olav Aarna,
Rector, Tallinn Technical University, Estonia and President of the European Access network.

Mary Tupan Wenno,
Department of Higher Professional Education, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Netherlands.

IN THE WORKPLACE

Is Your University Supporting Lifelong Learning For Its Own Staff?

Malcolm Sunderland and Daniel Vulliamy

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Abstract

Most universities have a poor track record of training and developing their own staff in the areas and the levels (one, two three and postgraduate) at which they are already in business. How easy is it for your staff, at all grades, to access those parts of the university's global portfolio of learning which may be of interest to them? What are the reasons for the low take up by staff?

- Narrow provision and lack of access,
- Lack of formal admissions criteria,
- Lack of flexibility of curriculum,
- Lack of flexibility of staff managers,
- Training budgets biased towards senior and academic staff,
- Presumption of skills & task-only training for non-academic staff.

The workshop will construct and review the models which existed in pre-1992 & post-1992 institutions. There will be several points of focus:-

We will seek to identify where the responsibility for identifying HE staff development and training needs is located,
We will seek to identify how staff development needs are identified,
We will seek to identify how staff development and training is financed.

Different structures at the very different institutions of Hull and Sheffield Hallam Universities will be examined. The varying influence of HRM, Continuing Education and autonomous Staff Development Units will be examined. Issues like accreditation and progression will be reviewed, as will be the relative influence of the individual worker, his/her line manager, the trade union, the Staff Development Unit and the corporate interest in shaping the final programme.

Background

Usually amongst the largest employers in the towns and cities they are based in, British universities have a poor track record in the training and development support afforded their own staff, bearing in mind that academic staff constitute only a small proportion of total employees.

HE is keen to express support for the extension of learning opportunities beyond the favoured minority, yet few parts of its global portfolio of learning opportunities are easily accessible in practice by the technicians, clerical staff, cleaners, porters and caterers that make up the bulk of the workforce.

The failure is particularly ironic for two reasons. First, large educational institutions are in a position to provide courses for their own staff at far less cost and inconvenience, with the marginal cost of staff attending courses at their own workplace often as low as zero, not to mention staff attendance helping achieve funded student target number targets. Second, the opportunity cost of low participation is greater because a serious commitment to internal staff development would deliver HE with greater understanding of the barriers to learning in the wider society, some of which can be overcome.

How easy is it for HE staff, at all grades, to access those parts of the University's prospectus which may be of interest to them? What are the reasons for the low take up by staff?

- Narrow range of provision;
- Lack of clear admissions criteria;
- Lack of flexibility of curriculum;
- Lack of flexibility of staff managers;
- Training budgets biased towards senior and academic staff;
- Presumption of skills and task-only training for non-academic staff;
- No central focus (such as a CE department) to assist staff.

Introduction

- A swift review of models of staff development operating in pre-1992 & post-1992 institutions reveals key issues determining the extent and shape of employee learning;
- Who identifies where the responsibility for defining HE staff development and training is located within the university structure?
- Who identifies how staff development needs are specified?; and;
- Who identifies how staff development and training is financed?

Different structures at the very different institutions of Hull and Sheffield Hallam Universities can be examined with a view to seeking how the future advancement of lifelong learning within HE can be encouraged. The varying influence of HRM, Continuing Education and autonomous Staff Development Units may be used to kick-start lifelong learning amongst a university's own employees, or alternatively, each unit may leave it to the others. Issues like accreditation and progression are just as important as the relative influence of the individual worker, of his/her line manager, of the trade union, of the training unit and of the corporate body. However, because of Government priorities there is a particular opportunity now for the continuing education activities of most universities to take an interest in leading and shaping employee driven lifelong learning from within the walls of their own employer.

The University of Hull identifies the space for debate around the possible goals of staff development:

> 'Staff Development within this University is defined as all those processes which enable staff to develop the knowledge, skills and abilities required to further both *institutional* and *personal* career development goals.' (our emphasis)

Similarly, Sheffield Hallam University brackets 'institutional' and 'personal' interests together in its consideration of any request from a member of staff to undertake training. Most universities have this dichotomy and potential conflict of interests, where the corporate body through the line manager has priorities which dictate specific task related training, but where the individual employee has wishes which are personal and about all-round career development. We can demonstrate the conflict in the table below.

INSTITUTIONAL	INDIVIDUAL
HRD Manager	Individual Staff Member
Corporate Needs	Personal Development
Why should I pay for your day off work?	I will do it in my own time
You will get trained and then you will leave	I will do my job better
You get qualified in a fringe area	I will enjoy it, be a better person, and therefore do my job better
Does it fit the departmental business plan?	The plan is me for the institution, not for me
Does it fit the RAE needs?	It fits the widening participation agenda of the university
I have to pay for your training	Just let me sit in one of your courses (units/modules) for free

Practice what we preach

In recent times, partly in response to pressures from DfEE and HEFCE, universities have engaged in one or more of the following activities:

- Promoting lifelong learning across the country;
- Encouraging local employers to train their employees locally; and;
- Initiating employee-led development schemes in LME's and SME's.

Yet the same institutions are not practising these activities within their own walls. Is there not a hint of hypocrisy here? We take external funding to advocate activities outside our own walls which we do not practice ourselves. We promulgate the skills of delivering these activities without having established best practice within our own organisation.

A University is also an employer. Staff are employees. In particular, non-academic staff may often be in positions in their career development where the courses which their employer is offering to the outside world are ideally suited for them to take advantage of, whether job-specific or not. Who will champion the case for employees to gain access to their employer's own courses? There are many possible supporters within HE:

- Senior Management;
- Personnel / HRM Department;
- Trade Unions;
- Individuals;
- Continuing Education;

We suggest that there is a role for CE here, in whatever of the different forms it takes within HE. CE staff have a particular responsibility to convince the senior management of the merits of training its own staff on its own courses. Persuasive arguments may be needed.

The argument for approval

We offer below eight different arguments which might be used in order to persuade management to approve the establishment of a scheme whereby its own staff can access its courses without charge for training which is not task specific but part of a broader picture of career and personal development. They are ordered with a ranking. The top ones take the high moral ground based upon a notion of 'right', and the bottom ones take a pragmatic stance based upon money.

a. Benevolent, altruistic, right. A good employer should be providing training for staff because it is only right and proper. It is an old fashioned argument but it is still true, even if it does not sit happily in the working practices of the modern accountable and performance indicator-driven HEI's;

b. Happy staff means a happy and productive workplace. Nobody can dispute the logic of this statement. It is generally accepted as true but, unfortunately, cannot be tied down to efficiency and quantity. There is clear evidence that a workforce which is encouraged to participate in training, particularly training of their choice, is a happy one. Is it not worth it to have a happy workplace in which a large number of other people (students) are present and rubbing shoulders with the happy enthusiastic employees? Here, we include rubbing shoulders with all employees within the organisation, from the cleaners in the halls of residence to academic staff in the lecture theatre;

c. Long-term investments. Well-trained staff are an asset. They do not necessarily leave for employment elsewhere immediately that they become better qualified. The majority stay and seek advancement and promotion within. VC's are constantly saying that, unlike in many companies in the UK, staff are easily the biggest asset in educational establishments. Therefore, the employer should care for them, not necessarily in altruistic fashion, but with the long-term future in mind;

d. HEI's practice inadequate staff development. Compared to national averages, universities have a very poor track record of staff training. Compared to world practices, UK HE is woefully inadequate. Here is a way to redress the balance, without having to go to great lengths to set up frameworks and infrastructures to allow it to happen;

e. Part time recruitment is a government priority. Universities are under pressure from DfEE to put more emphasis generally on the recruitment of part time students and to expand part time provision. HE employees represent a captive pool;

f. Part time courses are undersubscribed. Most universities are not recruiting to the specified target intake numbers on to individual courses. So there are empty places. Here is a way to fill some of them. The statistics for under-recruitment to courses are usually available, although often not easy to interpret;

g. 'Free' courses still attract HEFCE funding. Course funding is made up of two components. These are HEFCE funding and tuition fee funding, the latter usually smaller by a substantial factor. If a module or unit is offered free to a member of staff, then no tuition fee accrues. Will this loss of tuition fee be noticed when the course is already moderately full, sure to run, and resourced as a block regardless of size, if an extra staff member(s) attends? For every enrolment under target, the university's centre loses the HEFCE funding. The under-target can be minimised, or even reduced to zero, by extra students drawn from staff, and each extra student accrues the central funding which goes with it. The marginal cost of the place given to an employee may be as low as zero, whilst the marginal revenue represents at least 70% of that of a fee-paying UK student, far more for courses in B and C and above;

h. Essential component for Investors in People status. Depending on where an HEI is, in its progress with its local TEC, with seeking IiP status, this may be a powerful argument. Many Universities are in the process of obtaining IiP recognition, the drive usually stemming from the senior management. If the objective of the drive is for the status to be for the whole university as a collective organisation, then senior management may find this argument convincing. If the objective is for department-by-department achievement of IiP status, then the HR department may become a worthy ally.

The eight arguments above can be used individually or collectively with appropriate emphasis. Overall, they can be a powerful basis for discussion.

Once the decision that an HEI will proceed with a staff development programme has been made in principle, there will still be problems with implementation. We deal below with certain internal institutional problems. There is not space here to deal with an entirely separate tranche of issues, around why there may still be low take-up of opportunities for staff development - because courses are offered at the wrong time, wrong level, wrong length, and so on. Here we confine ourselves to the observation that the institutions' staff are not untypical. If they will not access courses offered free, it is likely that many other potential fee-paying students have the same difficulty. Urgent market research could be badly needed.

The centre versus the edge

Our experience has been that the major friction which develops usually derives from the consequence of the two different outlooks on resourcing which invariably exist between the 'centre' and the 'edge.'

The centre (typified by the director of the finance department) takes the view that HEFCE funding is being lost because targets are not being met. Here is a way to protect that funding drain without any extra effort on the part of the staff and without any extra resourcing having to be provided by the centre. The edge (typified by a lecturer in front of a class, or by a delivering department which collects tuition fees) takes the view that extra marking has to be done for extra students and that extra resourcing is required for larger classes, but yet there is no financial gain through the collection of tuition fees. The tension is particularly acute where 'contribution' to the centre is expressed out of the HEFCE funded element in the funding of teaching, but not out of the student tuition fee.

In this scenario, the centre has made the decision in principle to allow its own staff to enrol on its own units and modules. The centre is supportive. The centre collects the block funding. The centre is not involved in the day to day implementation of operating the training scheme. The edge may or may not be supportive. It sees yet another burden on already over-stretched delivery teams. At an operating level, the lack of support (in a myriad of different methods of non-cooperation) from individual lecturers and programme directors, may prove to be insurmountable. It is essential that the University Staff Development Officer, the Training Unit, or that part of the HRD that organises staff training, becomes involved in the administration of the scheme.

History of Staff Development in HEIs

Once upon a time, HEIs were models of bad practice. Access to funding for staff development opportunities was largely confined to research-active academics. The 1986/87 pay settlement was conditional upon the introduction of staff appraisal in some form. There was a great deal of resistance from the trade unions who saw the appraisal process as a potential disciplinary procedure. The negotiated compromise between the two sides was the inclusion of a clear staff development element so as to cope with shortfall between the two positions, (real, perceived or hidden). Consequently, most universities, for the first time, were compelled to appoint Staff Development Officers. Thus, although the reasons behind the origins of a concern for staff development beyond the wish for academic staff to attend prestigious international conferences may have lacked the highest of motives, new opportunities were created.

At Sheffield Hallam University, an Employee Led Development scheme was started in 1993. It is for training which is not job related, run by the employees through a co-ordinating committee with a budget, and mainly for manual grade staff and junior APT&C staff on sub-HE courses. Financial arguments have gradually been replaced as evidence has come through that staff development brings flexibility, confidence, ambition, positive attitude and an eagerness to undertake task related training at the suggestion of the line manager.

At the University of Hull, the incoming staff development officer targeted previously neglected categories of staff. Within a short time she freed herself from the entrenched perspectives of the Personnel Department and relocated the staff development function within the Continuing Education Department. The switch reflected the emphasis on the development of the individual, rather than being dictated by the corporate needs and resources. This has led to tensions between the traditional HRM model and the more progressive approach of the CE model which have not altogether been resolved. Senate and Council were persuaded to remove the tuition fee for staff (and ex-staff) attending courses of their choice, even to sharply reduce full-cost fees, although sadly there were attempts to restrict the facility to staff (and ex-staff) on contracts of 50% whole time equivalence.

Two years later, Sheffield Hallam University introduced its scheme for free places on its own modules, building on the success of the ELD scheme. Staff are now studying at undergraduate and postgraduate level. Enrolment is for as little as 10 credit points and as much as 80 credit points in an academic year. Enrolments are:

Academic year 1998 - 99	121
Academic year 1997 - 98	109 (plus 18)
Academic year 1996 - 97	55 (plus 38)

The figures in the brackets represent additional numbers into credit bearing taster units which were offered to pilot the scheme and were given dedicated publicity. It is difficult to make a reliable estimate of the purely financial benefits from the scheme because the HEFCE funding is complex. However, in a best case scenario, an under target of 50 part time students in 1997-98 funding year would have meant that most HEI's would not have received £58,000 of core funding. This alone is a powerful argument even to those who are not convinced about the points itemised above in the top half of the list above.

Recent trends and recent gains are not irreversible. At Hull, there are voices arguing plausibly that the staff development function should be located within an expanded HRM unit, regardless of the likelihood that this in practice would tend to re-establish the predominance of institutional over individual development needs which cost money.

Conclusion

The workshop concluded with discussion which addressed the following five questions:

i. How typical are the universities of Hull and Sheffield Hallam?;
j. Are HEI's practising what they preach?;
k. Who brings the Centre and the Edge together?;
l. Is this an area of work that CE should legitimately step into?;
m. What are the stories from your institution?;

Frameworks For Effective Corporate Learning

Elaine Hendry and Lynne Caley

Lynne Caley and Elaine Hendry are Senior Programme Managers at the University of Cambridge Programme for Industry. CPI is part of the University's Board of Continuing Education, and has operated for 10 years in the area of professional development.

Abstract

This workshop reported and discussed the first year of a two-year, DfEE-funded project to develop practical guidelines for organisations wishing to improve the way they manage their employee development. Work to date suggests that a new approach is required if organisations and individuals are to respond to the challenges presented by the post-industrial era. Following an intensive research exercise, a number of factors have been identified which enable and enhance learning, both for organisations and individuals. The factors are currently being used to inform the design and implementation of three professional programmes being developed as part of the project. The guidelines will not only be published in a format accessible to organisations of a sizes, but will also be developed into an analytic tool, designed to help organisations address the factors from their own context.

Work Based Learning and Access to Higher Education

Carol Costley

Dr Carol Costley is Head of Research at the National Centre for Work Based Learning Partnerships at Middlesex University. Research interests include methodologies and epistemologies in work based learning; interdisciplinarity; using life history to reflect on previous learning; argument in work based learning. Projects include, links with universities in Brazil to further research on 'work, curriculum and learning'; business links with Cyprus to further the development of the work based curriculum; and the continuing development of the new Doctorate in Professional Studies at Middlesex University both in the UK and abroad.
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Abstract

Work Based Learning at Middlesex University offers awards from certificate to doctorate in a learner managed, negotiated framework. Admission through an open access module allows reflection on current abilities leading to accreditation of learning that is relevant towards the award sought. Gaining academic credits gives confidence that HE level has already been attained. Research and Development is then studied in order to undertake work-based projects.

This approach particularly suits people with experience of work (interpreted in its broadest sense). The framework can be reproduced using various models to suit a whole range of people. Issues are: reaching the people and funding the programmes. This paper takes an overview and includes issues of IT, gender, ethnicity, non-traditional learners etc. It proposes 'new' styles of learning and recognition of previously under-represented knowledges.

Introduction

Taylor's paper gives a global view of how the new curriculum area of work based learning has evolved. This paper uses the case of Work Based Learning Studies (WBLS) at Middlesex University (MU) to examine more closely three main issues that are raised. These are, the positive and negative ramifications of the developments in curricula, the theorising of the work based learning curriculum and whether universities can resist the heavy capital influences of marketisation and commercialisation.

Firstly, through WBLS modules at MU, there is a greater access to a wider society, particularly people from previously under-represented groups. These groups include generations of people who did not receive a higher education because, in the past, it was only available to a limited number. Access is therefore taken to mean an open pathway into higher education for people of all ages and abilities to come in at any level. It is not restricted to the initial access of undergraduate students because work based learning has the capacity to access people to any level at which they are already working.

Secondly, there is discussion of how this field of study can be theorised and a key point here is that 'work' must be construed in its broadest sense in order to construct an inclusive theoretical framework for WBLS. At present, the flexibility of the programme at MU means that a range of models of work based learning is offered. The range of models is possible because of the holistic interpretation given to the term 'work'. Butler (1992) refers to work as 'all purposeful and useful activity' whilst the UAce Work based Learning Network (1999) describes work based learning as 2learning for, in and through paid and unpaid work.' WBLS at MU embraces these definitions and has the flexibility to meet the needs of people who are ready to study at a higher education level. Most people work, regardless of, for example, social, racial and gender groupings. An inclusive definition of work is therefore important so higher education is not just acknowledging the work of the privileged or the work of the wage earners.

Thirdly the issues of funding are briefly reviewed in respect to the degree of choice that universities have in marketing programmes and selecting students from differing communities of practice.

An inclusive curriculum framework

WBLS is able to access more people into higher education for a number of reasons. Firstly, the content of the core modules are designed to meet the needs of all people who want to structure high level learning whilst doing work and most people are involved in work of some kind. Secondly, the modules provide diverse structures for study that can be customised to meet individual and organisational needs by starting people from a position of their existing knowledge and understanding. Thirdly, WBLS acknowledges existing expertise and abilities by accrediting high level abilities towards an award sought if they are relevant to that named award. This is because we now recognise that high levels of learning can be achieved whilst doing work and other activities (see Garnett 1998).

As well as the above practical reasons there are key reasons why work based learning captures the imagination of a broad range of people. The reasons centre round its relevance and usefulness to people doing work. These include the attention given to reflexivity as a means of successful practice and the acknowledgement of the self, identity and context.

A description of the core modules that make up a WBLS programme is given including the aspects of the modules that contribute to accessing a diverse range of learners. Students may build in modules from the disciplines that are relevant to the award sought. The first core module is discussed at some length as this module is an 'open access' module at MU and has many components that enable access.

Figure 1

Core modules in Work Based Learning Studies at Middlesex University

1. Recognition and Accreditation of Learning (RAL)

2. Programme Planning, including a Learning Agreement

3. Research methods (called Project Planning and Development at undergraduate level)

4. Work Based Project/s

The model represented in *figure 1* outlines the programmes of study taken by WBLS students at levels that range from foundation to postgraduate. Currently, a majority of WBLS students are working at postgraduate level and there is also a route that includes all the elements listed in *figure 1*, at doctorate level. However there are substantial numbers of people who undertake Certificates, Diplomas and Bachelors degrees and these numbers are rising.

The simplicity of the programme enables flexibility and a clear, unambiguous pathway for students. This approach reduces a fear of failure and clarifies the expectations that the university has of the student. The core modules remain the same whatever the level of study and have, broadly speaking, the same content. It is the student's application during their study and the level assessment criteria that determine the individual's level of Award. Experienced tutors can estimate the level of study whilst working with the student on the first module. The accreditation process that takes place at the end of the RAL module, substantiates the individual level and a suitable continuation path can then be planned in the second, planning module. In this way, students with no previous qualifications may enter the programmes and find that they are already thinking, learning and working at a high level.

Benefits of the Recognition and Accreditation of Learning (RAL) module

This module is open for anyone who is able to study at higher education level. It involves the compiling of a claim for academic credit and can be taken as a discreet learning exercise in itself. It is possible to enter this module at any university level. The module can be taken by people who have experience of work that involves abilities in written communications, reflection on work processes and systems, problem solving leading to application for which they have evidence and a command of the English language that meets the university standard. Most people can therefore take this module and receive considerable benefits from it.

Acceptance on this module is not necessarily acceptance onto a university award and so it is possible to use the module to include a very broad group of people. We have found that people will then self select and decide for themselves through the experience of taking the module, whether higher education is for them.

If they decide, with advice from their adviser, not to pursue any further study, they will still gain a certificate of credit stating the areas for which they have been recognised and accredited and they will have had a worthwhile learning experience. Some people decide not to continue with an award programme straight away but then return in due course to continue with study.

When taken as a discreet learning exercise, students discover that the RAL module involves critical reflection on experience by organising learning in a particular way and arguing the case for why the learning is worthy of credit. The rethinking of past learning and understanding, transforming and synthesising of experience, contextualised in familiar roles and settings, that portfolio preparation involves is itself an indicator of academic ability. The module recognises learning from wherever and however it occurs. In teasing out, grouping and categorising learning, students identify their own patterns of learning and make career decisions on the basis of this self-discovery. Such critical skills are likely to have already been developed to a greater or lesser extent through students' engagement at work. RAL builds on existing abilities and involves the active deployment and development of critical and reflective abilities initiated whilst doing work. For mature students, in particular who have acquired considerable learning and ability from work based and other experience there are many benefits. They are enabled to start their academic study from a position of current understanding; they represent themselves and their own learning; and take responsibility for the knowledge content and how it is formulated. The process is confirmatory to a sense of self and is personally and professionally developmental. From work they often bring abilities of planning efficiency, group working and group learning that can be built upon in HE. As in Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, RAL enables students to place themselves at a point on the cycle and introduces them to the concepts of reflective learning (see Doncaster 1999). Students' gain considerably from doing this and those who pursue WBLS build on the process with a view to becoming reflexive practitioners who can meet their full potential doing work.

The RAL module contains what has become known as an Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning component but goes beyond this more traditional use of accreditation as a means of reviewing previous learning in order to gain academic credit. At MU it is also used as a tool for progression by positioning a planning component in the module that links reflection to progression. Students make claims with a view to their current interests and future aspirations. In this way they not only gain access to higher education but also gain progression in their working life. They claim general credit from a broad range of their work and other experience but focus it towards a possible future programme of study which they customise, with advice, according to their own developmental needs. The process of looking forward enables people to contemplate the possibilities for their future and thus confirm their sense of self and changing identity.
The RAL process focuses students on their aims and purposes in their personal and professional

development. They do not have to repeat learning they already have by undertaking study in areas where they may already have expertise and they develop increasingly specific aims for their future. It is a means of benchmarking this learning against a university standard and so using RAL as a diagnostic tool, they consolidate their current learning, assess themselves and either follow a full programme of study or take the certificate of credit. It is because it is used in this forward looking way that students can gain so much from it.

Using the credit gained towards a university award

Continuing to persuade the disciplines to accept credit in work based and experiential learning is important for mature learners. In WBLS we have found that people can be greatly empowered by the knowledge with which they have already been working at a higher level. The process they go through whilst undertaking the module enables them to state their experience and couch it in terms that have significance to level descriptors at the university. The process of doing this acts as an introduction and access to higher education study and learning. People learn the nature of applied knowledge, theoretical knowledge, depth of knowledge, synthesis of knowledge and so on. As they express their learning in this way, they realise that grasping concepts, reflecting on knowledge and selecting then applying knowledge appropriately are attributes they may already have. They may also realise that they have accrued a body of knowledge that may or may not fit into one particular discipline area. An example of an undergraduate student will demonstrate the importance of the RAL process.

A mature female student had studied for accountancy qualifications in Sri Lanka using English as the language of study. She had then worked in Accounts for two and a half years applying her knowledge and again using the English language. The student prepared a portfolio through the RAL module that identified the certificated and uncertificated learning she had achieved in Sri Lanka. She had been in Great Britain for one year and had not worked. She wanted to study for a degree in Accountancy. We sent her portfolio to specialist markers in the MU Business School. The portfolio was assessed as reflecting enough credits at level one to cover the amount a full time student would achieve in the first year of study. There were also a number of credits in Accountancy at level two some of which directly reflected the content of MU Business School's modules. The result would indicate that the student had abilities in Accountancy that were comparable to a full time student half way through an Accountancy honours degree.
The student wanted to pursue a career in Accountancy and would therefore ultimately need recognition of her qualification from a Professional body. At this time all of the Accountancy Professional bodies only recognised degrees that were assessed though examination which meant that she could not take a degree in a Work Based Accountancy qualification. However she could transfer these level one and two credits (or some of them) towards an Accountancy degree, subject to academic discretion. She was unable to transfer any credit at all to any of the universities where she applied. They were all willing to take her straight onto their degree programme but most of them said her applied learning was not acceptable as an entry into the second year or even part of the way through the first year. They said the first year modules contained particular information put in a particular way that built upwards towards the final degree. The student then wrote to the Professional Bodies with her story and received some very

positive replies that stated that the Professional Bodies very much valued her work based experience and that it was in many respects more valuable than campus based learning. When the student presented this letter to the academics they accepted her into the second year.

The above example is not unusual. Universities, discipline areas and academics within each area have differing approaches to the transfer of credit. Unfortunately the premise does not always seem to be the actual abilities of the student and the best interests of the student. This unfortunate situation affects some students more than others. International students who seek professional requalification with qualification from a British university, people who have achieved through working hard in their job or educating themselves but have no formal education, all suffer from the inability to transfer credit. However if they continue their qualification path through WBLS, it is possible to use all the relevant credit they have towards up to two thirds of the award sought.

At MU we were so concerned that academics were not accepting the student's credit that we devised a module that could award what we termed 'specific' credit. In this module students have to demonstrate that they already have the knowledge that is contained in an existing MU module. To do this we have to work closely with colleagues in the discipline areas that own the module for which the student is hoping to gain credit. Students can then benchmark learning that carries particular higher education levels against existing modules. This route has worked well when colleagues have been willing to work with us and when we have been able to progress a group of students rather than an individual. For example, a number of employees working in the environmental planning department of a local authority were able to gain credit in some MU environmental studies modules.

People are already involved in learning that is based in their work so it has personal relevance for them. This is why we start with the individuals in their communities of practice and move them from their current knowledge level to develop and acquire new knowledge that is relevant for both the individual and the community of practice.

Programme Planning, including a Learning Agreement

Those people who wish to pursue their learning towards a higher award are advised how they can use the credit gained. Many MU students use their focussed credit towards WBLS awards. The changing climate that encourages trust between academics and other professionals (Dearing Report 1998) and the idea that the transfer element in the CATS has meant that students increasingly are able to use credit gained towards awards in other discipline areas. This route has potential to access an even greater number of students than through WBLS but other subject areas are often reticent about accepting credit gained through the RAL process as described above. This is equally the case, whether the student wishes to transfer the credit within MU or take it to another university. One way of overcoming this obstacle for undergraduate students wishing to study at MU is for them to either major in work based studies and minor in the other subject or vice versa. The credit gained could then be used in the WBLS option.

Another option might be for students to select the modules they wish to study in the other specialist area and subject to acceptance by academics for the student to take their modules; the student can incorporate them into their WBLS programme.

The planning module provides the opportunity to customise ones own learning and decide on the time taken and manner of study. It involves a three-way agreement between student, university and (if appropriate) the student's community of practice (this is not necessarily an employer).

Research methods and Work Based Project/s

Methodologies are those that have relevance for the individuals in their communities of practice and an approach is used that is ideologically suited to the students within their already familiar context. Methods are those that are appropriate for work based practice. There is a 'real' value involved in a practice-based programme that has a practical lifelong learning focus. This outlook appeals to those with pragmatic concerns that are often mostly concerned with Project Planning and Development.

Practitioner led methods of investigation such as Action Research, are implemented not just for professional development and improved practice but also to increase social justice through networks of practitioners. This is based on relationships, understanding commonalities and difference, and collective rather than individual practices. The methods used for research and development provide a process model of change.

Having studied research and development techniques students then undertake one or more work based projects. The project generates new knowledge that is of value to the student, the community of practice and has academic legitimacy.

The practitioner knowledge within a work-based project is a version, based on insider knowledge that has undergone vigorous research and development from a reflective practitioner. It has been held as subjugated knowledge, previously neglected by universities because it does not subscribe to universality and the technical-rationality mode of practice. Methodologically, it was/is seen as anecdotal, situationally specific and not generalisable. However, the reflective practice involved in the process of work based knowledge production and the focus of knowledge 'outside' of the university gives work based learning the platform to challenge traditional notions of epistemology that assert 'objectivity', 'value-neutrality' and the exclusivity of knowledge in subject disciplines.

Learning based in work demands outcomes and closure. Although we know in lifelong learning, practitioners will subject work-based knowledge to continuing development, dissemination and reconstruction, there is still a consistent demand for an end product. The seemingly unwieldy and limitless process of generating knowledge in work based learning is restricted by the requirements to complete a task which has a tangible outcome or product within a given amount of time, to be succinct and to tailor the work for academic and professional purposes.

Conceptualising Work for Equity and Inclusion

Work based learning is taking on the knowledge issues that have resulted from discourses in higher education and wider, global social discourses. Experiences at MU have shown that there are currently, certain polarities in people's thinking that are not useful and can detract from the formulation of global and inclusive perspectives that lead to effective, holistic models of work based learning.

The holistic definition of 'work' in work based learning encompasses 'all purposeful and useful activity'. Any academic evaluation of the study of learning based in work should therefore take a view of work that relates to its nature rather than to its capital benefits. There are two broad points to be made here. The first is that work often carries an economic imperative but not all work is paid employment. The second is that work usually has a practical purpose but in working towards specific goals or outcomes, theoretical knowledge also needs to be invoked.

Firstly, the polarisation of the knowledge and abilities in paid and unpaid work is not recognised at MU where WBLS does not attempt to too narrowly define itself by restricting the boundaries of its knowledge base to paid work only. There are indicative models of work based learning that can be found in employing organisations, however, the cluster of models involving employee learning are not the only models of work based learning nor are they representative of the majority of people's experience of work. Further, it is recognised that people bring their experiential knowledge from both paid and unpaid work activities to whatever new work they undertake.

Secondly, the artificial polarisation of the vocational and the academic is challenged (see for example Portwood's 2000 conception of 'the learned worker'). This polarisation emanates from understanding theory and practice as separate and as one necessarily preceding the other. It is broken down by viewing the practical applications of work and its underpinning knowledge or theorising, as cyclical and at some points in the cycle as taking place simultaneously, often conceptualised as Praxis. A higher education perspective on practical application necessarily offers underlying theoretical knowledge. Existing, so called, vocational models of learning through work, where abilities in doing and thinking are usually measured as competent performance and operational skill can be underpinned though reflexivity and theorising in WBLS. Models of practice that appear to focus on the practical, benefit from higher education approaches to learning and knowledge through programmes of study that can add the kind of value for individuals and for communities of practice that is associated with university learning.

These two examples can be seen to represent a conflation, through work based learning, of what has hitherto been high and low aspects of intellectual culture. The contention at MU is that work based knowledge identifies with pluralist ideologies and that standards should follow criteria that conform to a generic, higher education level but not necessarily to the conventions traditionally accorded on a basis of conformity to a subject discipline. For these reasons there is some controversy concerning work based learning because it may appear to be 'populist' and challenge a 'standard'.

Work based learning could be viewed as a practical application of the more recent academic/ philosophical discourse of post-structuralism that critiques epistemology. It shares the post-structuralists' interests in the language representation of truths and how there are only 'versions' of texts, that are always open to interpretation.

As further research into work based knowledge progresses, there is a need to re-evaluate all higher education aspects of learning in and through work. In doing so, we can embrace inclusiveness and add value to the domain of work for many more groups in society. Such re-evaluation will acknowledge hitherto subjugated knowledges that may, for example be found in feminised occupations, voluntary organisations and the domestic and community spheres of work. Within all communities of practice there are standpoints from a variety of perspectives, for example from women who seek to take up authority in organisations and encounter situations where internalised images of power and authority intersect with organisational cultures and social stereotypes. These are some of the many issues connected with higher education's responsibility to meet the long-term needs of people doing work.

Beneficiaries and Funders of Work Based Learning

A further tension is between an emancipatory knowledge interest and current concerns in higher education that universities are being 'used' to fulfil the short-term needs of a capitalist economy and thereby lowering or compromising values set out in many of the internal discourses. Indeed while WBLS is currently developing and drawing from a range of philosophies, ideologies, a very broad range of epistemologies and methodologies, it is producing and evolving policy and practice that encourages greater student inclusiveness. Some educationalists are feeling compelled to contain WBLS within paid work, vocationalism and an organisational setting. The danger of claiming this version of WBLS as comprehensive leads to a reversion to the construction of a power dynamic that distorts the nature of work into a capitalist intellectual hierarchy especially a gendered relation to work (Oakley 1972, Butler 1995). In this instance, knowledge in work based learning would be marginalised and divided into subject knowledge which confines knowledge in an artificial but traditional way (Bourdieu 1973, Harvey 1992). Such narrowness would mean few alternative options for students who wish to pursue work based learning.

The tensions between emancipatory knowledge interests and the need to provide capable workers for the economy lies alongside the disapproval over the conflation of hitherto high and low aspects of intellectual culture. The resolution of these issues may be seen as WBLS continues to make itself in different knowledge communities where differing versions of the curriculum area are emerging. Influential parties at these different sites will have a dominant say in what constitutes work based knowledge. It may be those in universities who want to develop work based knowledge as set of tools useful for fitting students with capabilities that encompass what is meant by graduateness and capable practitioners. It may be the reformers who wish to see higher education open to a much wider group of people in society on the grounds of democracy. It may be that both perspectives can be satisfied. The needs of the national economy for a more highly educated workforce and research that supports profitability, has led to initiatives such as those recommended by the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE 1996), for universities to provide curricula and pedagogy that will support and develop the UK workforce through partnerships between government, industry and universities. The Fryer Report (1997) recommends that 'successful expansion of workplace learning to all will have to be based upon a broad, inclusive policy framework which is supported by a strong foundation of provision which develops learning skills and widens participation through equality of opportunity'.

It is still the case that funding for the development of work based knowledge comes mainly from sources that seek to develop knowledge that furthers important and significant advances for the workforce. Entering into another polarisation of bad developers and good reformers may not be helpful. All the stakeholders (e.g. funding bodies, university academics, employers, community leaders, student representatives) are responsible for making a case for an equitable work based knowledge, and especially for the higher education community to intellectualise the case by conducting research, and progressing teaching and learning.

Conclusion

The practitioner or group of practitioners within a particular community of practice can make meaningful arguments. Through their reflective practices, knowledge is generated in those practices where people have their own particular identity as subjects in a specified context that has a particular language and culture. Work based learning therefore validates 'the self' in a context whereas objective models may invalidate such subjective practitioner knowledge. This enables a strong sense of identity in the student/practitioner that is more likely to lead to development of self and self-actualisation through work. In this way WBLS can be a catalyst in motivating people and thus enabling their access to higher education.

Through a reflexive approach WBLS recognises the need to make deliberate choices about values. It is involved with all work, paid and unpaid. Locating itself in discursive paradigms of critique and change, it recognises the tensions between the economic interests of market systems and the democratic agenda of educationalists. Work based knowledge according to WBLS at MU is a version that relates to epistemology as discourses that are external and internal to the university that incorporates power relations and contradictions. The way these are managed and the possibilities that are pursued are a matter for funding bodies and universities in their mission and commitment to serve the whole community rather than just businesses.

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Work-Related Learning, Equity And Inclusion

Dick Taylor

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Abstract

The Government's Lifelong Learning agenda is concerned essentially with two developmental policy objectives as far as HE is concerned: the enhancement of the skills base, for 'HRM' reasons, and the social equity agenda. Work Related Learning clearly relates to the first of these. Much of the development, which is still quite small scale but is certain to increase, is at M level and is oriented towards middle managers *et al.* But does it - or can it - also address the social equity agenda? Is WRL a means, potentially, of achieving not only greater accessibility, but of addressing social purpose and 'critical thinking' concerns? The paper will discuss these issues with some reference to the experience at the University of Leeds.

The following are the overheads used in the presentation of the above paper:

One

- Knowledge society: human capital ('Today, knowledge and skills now stand alone as the only source of comparative advantage', Thurow, 1970)
- Relocation of major businesses to Third World
- Downsizing, abolition of workers' rights/T.U.s etc
- Media socialisation

Two - Inequality

- E.g. In USA in 1980s all rises in real income went to richest 20%
- CEOs of top 500 companies increased from 35 to 157 times that of average production worker
- In 1993 richest 20% of households had 13.4 times as much income as the poorest 20%; and top 1% of population controlled 40% of US wealth
- E.g. from 1973 to 1993, average incomes of all male workers fell by 11% - real per capita GDP rose by 29%

Three

- Declining rate of profitability (masked in US by squeeze on wages) throughout Western world
- Coupled with destruction of major industrial base
- Therefore reduction in - social services, infrastructure
- And expansion in - labour casualisation, outsourcing, end of workers' rights/T.U.

Four

- Globalisation of capital
- Vocationalism and new ways of organising work
- Pervasive ideology of the market

Five - dilemmas for Work Related Learning

Positive

- Education and learning taken seriously by capital (LLL and the 'Learning organisation': Human capital)
- Involve employers, employees and Universities in partnership
- Humanising the workplace; 'critical thinking?'
- 'post-Fordism' and more sophisticated workforce?

Six - Dilemmas for Work Related Learning (2)

Negative

- Inequality, undermining of socialism and T.U.s, and global untramelled power of capital
- Education and training for Labour as a 'commodity', serving capital uncritically
- The Business University: 'corporate classrooms' etc.
- Epistemological and curricular authority passing to the business culture

Seven - Dilemmas for Work Related Learning (3)

Practice

- WRL seen as self-financing, 'third leg' funding for HLS market
- LLL as social control and 'pathologising' non-learners
- For cost effectiveness and QA reasons, Masters provision is the norm
- Questionable whether employers or Universities willing to extend WRL to trade unionists and other working class groups (partnerships with FE? ODL?)
- Pedagogic and curricular issues for WRL delivery: employers' roles, ODL/IT, 'collegiality' etc.

THE HOME

Credit and Credibility: Personal Development Plans for Lifelong Learning

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Abstract

In this paper, we examine the impact of the interrelationships between economic drivers, business agendas and government policy on the experience of people undertaking professional development. We examine three models of the experience of work-based learners which are associated with the response of business and governments to particular economic conditions. In Model 1 the learner is depicted as *the trainee*, as an empty vessel being filled with knowledge which is relatively stable and packageable into familiar vocational areas; in Model 2 we describe *the gridlocked learner* struggling with arrays of assessment criteria defined by organisations and by governments in an attempt to manage novel and confusing economic conditions; in Model 3 we suggest that it may be possible to identify the emergence of *the self-managed learner*, who whilst empowered to make personally meaningful choices about lifelong learning, at the same time is inescapably burdened with lifelong responsibility for continuing development. We illustrate these three models by drawing on our experience of providing management and professional development at postgraduate and post-experience levels.

Introduction

Our premise in this paper is that the salient features of the economic environment, and how these are perceived by government, has a significant influence on government policy in relation to Higher Education. Government policy, mediated by funding regimes and economic development agencies, together with the direct relationships which exist between HE institutions and client organisations, will all act to shape the content and structure of the HE curriculum. People engaging in vocational and professional education within the HE sector are caught up in this web of influences, and as a result their experiences as learners are mediated in particular ways by these approaches to the curriculum.

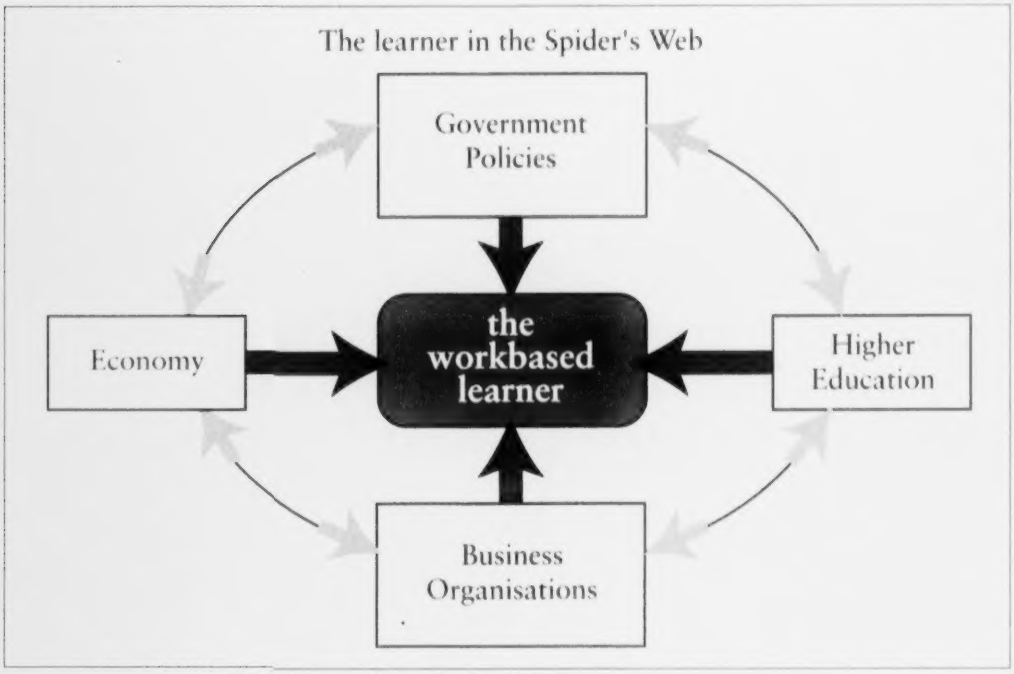
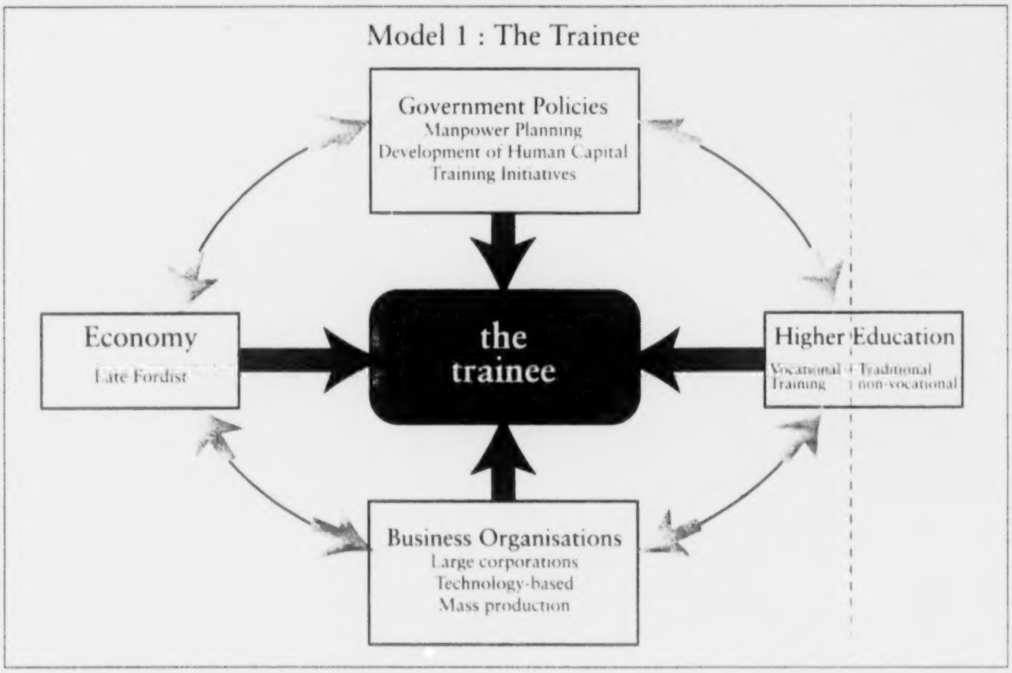


FIGURE 1: THE LEARNER AT THE HEART OF A WEB OF INFLUENCE

This model of the learner at the centre of a web of cross cutting influences is of necessity an abstraction and thus represents little more than a fragment of the multiple pressures and considerations which any individual learner has to take into account when engaging in vocational or professional development. Furthermore, the model focuses on the HE sector and does not attempt to evaluate directly the impact of other sectors or organisations involved in education and training. It does suggest though that the structure and content of the HE curriculum is always affected by the interplay between the parties and players described in the model; in consequence the experience of learners cannot be understood as the product of the decisions of autonomous HE institutions.

In our three models, we identify distinctive economic and policy characteristics which we suggest have given rise to particular constructs of, and experiences for work-based learners. The models are therefore to some extent tied to specific periods in terms of the prevailing modes of economic organisation. However, aspects of each of the models can be found in periods other than those in which it prevails.


Model 1 : The Trainee
Government Policies
Manpower Planning
Development of Human Capital
Training Initiatives
Economy
Late Fordist
the
trainee
Higher Education
Vocational Training
Traditional non-vocational
Business Organisations
Large corporations
Technology-based
Mass production

MODEL 1: THE LEARNER AS TRAINEE

In Model 1 the learner is constructed as the trainee. The word 'trainee' immediately conjures up images of regimentation, of people being treated as types rather than individuals, of everyone following the same course, learning the same things and acquiring the same skills. Training is carried out by trainers, the 'old hands' who have themselves been trained and have practised the necessary skills. There are pre-set standards and levels which must be achieved on completion of the training. Getting a particular job depends on either having completed the training necessary beforehand or having suitable skills on entry to demonstrate potential for 'training up'. Training in this model is associated with stability in occupational roles, where the demands and requirements of jobs change only gradually, and any new skills and knowledge requirements can be managed through short courses of retraining.

The period to which this model best applies is that from the late 1950s through to the early 1970s: a period described by Harvey (1990) as late 'Fordism'. Fordism sums up the mass production regimes, based in a handful of industrialised countries in the West and Japan, which dominated world markets in the post-war period up until the early 1970s. The distinctive organisational form of the period was the large, technology-based production corporation. Such large corporations held the promise of continued survival and growth through technological development; mass production, fixed capital investment; economies of scale through standardisation; and managerialism. Indeed, because of its all-pervading deep assumptions of functionality and efficiency, Harvey terms Fordism 'less a mere system of mass production, and more as a total way of life' (p. 135).

Harvey suggests that the boundaries of continuous Fordist expansion were being approached in the mid 1960s, (although the collision with the barrier did not take place until the 1973 recession). Continued expansion depended on opening up new world markets, but this stimulated the development of these new markets as Fordist competitors. At the same time, rationalisation of production in the West resulted in a deflation of the home markets.

Government policies in relation to HE at this period concentrated on efforts to shore up a weakening economy. Higher Education in this period was still primarily non-vocational, with Universities seen as 'ivory towers' not principally associated with the world of work. There was also concern that the meritocratic initiatives introduced into the school sector were not reflected in HE because of the limited number of places available to and taken up by young people from the state sector. In consequence, insufficient numbers of able school leavers were going on to University, and those who were, were not following vocationally relevant programmes. Government policies were therefore directed towards making the HE curriculum more vocationally oriented, and to increase the number and range of HE places available. A further concern for governments was to increase the numbers of mature students and part-time students in HE in order to encourage re-entry into the economy, particularly for mature women or for those changing career and to provide high level training for those in work, especially in the professions.

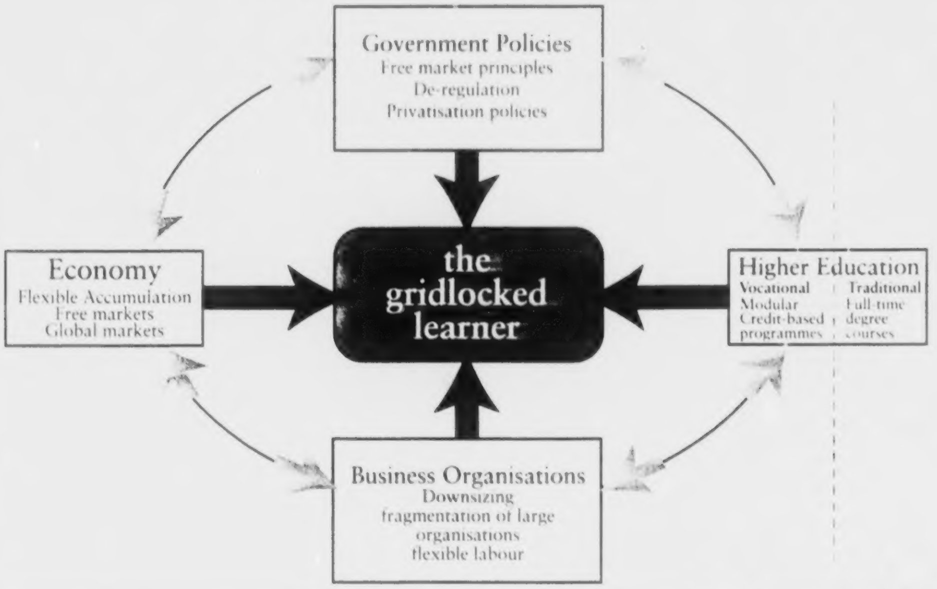
All of these concerns were reflected in the Robbins report in the 1960s which led to the creation of the Polytechnics and other technological education institutions with a strongly vocational emphasis. The development of a more vocationally oriented curriculum in HE was therefore the outcome of this interplay between economic imperatives, government priorities and academic practices. Much emphasis was placed on manpower planning techniques, in order to yield better economic performance within the Fordist paradigm. The curriculum therefore became a reflection of the economic environment: new awards relating to defined occupational areas were created; students became passive recipients of these new defined bodies of knowledge; and there was little integration between academic and vocational hierarchies. The trainee had virtually no say in the content of courses or degrees and little control over how, when or where training took place.

Model 2: The gridlocked learner

The 1980s and 90s have been a period of radical change to the HE curriculum. These decades have seen the widespread adoption of credit-based modular curricula in the former Polytechnic/new University sector. This is anticipated to encompass all HE provision, from undergraduate to research degrees, with the expected implementation of a national credit and qualifications framework towards the end of the year 2000.

The existence of modular, rather than course-based, curricula, provides the possibility of increased choice for the individual student. However (with the exception of a relatively small proportion of mature students taking advantage of negotiated award programmes) we have observed this period as a time of disempowerment, rather than empowerment, for work-based learners. We suggest that this phenomenon finds its explanation in the changing economic conditions of this period, and the response of business and of Government to this radical change.

Model 1 : The Gridlocked Learner


Government Policies
Free market principles
De-regulation
Privatisation policies
Economy
Flexible Accumulation
Free markets
Global markets
the gridlocked learner
Higher Education
Vocational
Modular
Credit-based programmes
Traditional
Full-time degree courses
Business Organisations
Downsizing
fragmentation of large organisations
flexible labour

Quoting Calhoun, Harvey (p. 119) implies that any significant transformation will tend to provoke extreme reactions:

> 'The interval between the decay of the old and the formation and establishment of the new, constitutes a period of transition, which must always necessarily be one of uncertainty, confusion, error, and wild and fierce fanaticism.'

Harvey (1990:173) terms this period the 'post-Fordist era of flexible accumulation', contrasting it with the preceding condition in which large mass production systems provided relatively secure employment for large numbers of employees. The era of flexible accumulation is characterised by: increased economic globalisation and competition and the dismantling and dispersal of large bureaucracies. Large organisations were split up and the fragments were cut loose into the free market; they could then 'recombine' by providing services to other organisations. This caused radical change in labour market structures towards flexible employment arrangements in which firms retain a core of employees with key specialisms or generic business skills, and draw on a pool of other workers as and when their services are needed.

The changing employment structures mean that the need for courses based on lifetime occupation declines, and is replaced with the need for chunks of learning which can be recombined to suit individual career patterns - a push towards modularisation of vocational HE.

Judging from the language of the business and management press, Western organisations have certainly found this new environment anxiety-provoking. It is described as turbulent, chaotic, and in the midst of constant, 'white water' change (Vaill, 1986). Organisations have been forced to cut costs in order to remain competitive, and at the same time have needed to eliminate the very rigidities which formerly guaranteed efficiency and success. Various coping strategies have been adopted. These have included downsizing, combined with efforts to 'get back in control' using strategic planning processes.

The twin forces of an unstable environment and a smaller workforce has prompted the development of two 'softer' coping strategies which attempt to engage employees more fully in the ongoing struggle in the competitive environment. Organisational learning is intended to encourage each member to actively develop and share their learning about their own bit of the environment; and empowerment seeks to give each member increased autonomy - often perforce, due to the stripping out of management layers. In reality, organisational learning and empowerment initiatives are frequently driven from the top down with predetermined objectives and ironically, the opposite of genuine empowerment may result in that control over employees is increased.

Thus, high on the organisational agenda has been the need to get more productivity from fewer employees; to eliminate rigidity; but at the same time a reluctance to cede control.
In the UK, the Conservative Government made a two-pronged response to the global competitive environment. First, market principles were extended to all areas of social life. The early years of this Government in particular can be seen as a major social project to establish a market-led individualism. The phrase 'there is no such thing as society - only individuals' sums up this position well. The free market was extended to encompass sectors which were previously under the auspices of state planning, and fragmentation was enforced in the public sector through compulsory competitive tendering.

Secondly, in an attempt to get back in control over the global environment in which 'UK plc' was now a competitor, Government sought to define standards of occupational competence in all sectors of employment and developed National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) as both an expression and assessment vehicle for these standards. Achievement of NVQs must be based on evidence of work-based performance meeting detailed performance criteria. The role of knowledge is to underpin performance; rather than being assessed specifically, its presence is inferred when competent performance is demonstrated.

HE was also marched into the free market fold. By reducing government funding and encouraging institutions to generate income, a stick and carrot incentive for HE to enter the marketplace was set up. Thus, institutions were poised to respond on a commercial basis to the needs and fears of business organisations.

Thus, the HE curriculum was exposed to several strong, novel forces: the need to break up courses into modules to reflect changing work patterns and facilitate consumer choice; the need for institutions to behave like businesses competing in a marketplace; and the demand for Government and business clients to gain greater involvement in determining the curriculum. Consequently, HE institutions have increasingly come to regard the learning opportunities they provide as consumer products. Credit-based systems aim to be transparent, with products clearly labelled and described in brochures, prospectuses and module catalogues. The parallel requirement to make explicit the learning outcomes of each module, programme or award means that learners know exactly what they can expect to get from the product (in the words of a current advertisement, 'does exactly what it says on the tin'). Similarly, they expect assessment requirements and criteria and charges to be published at the outset (the price which must be paid in terms of fees and human effort).

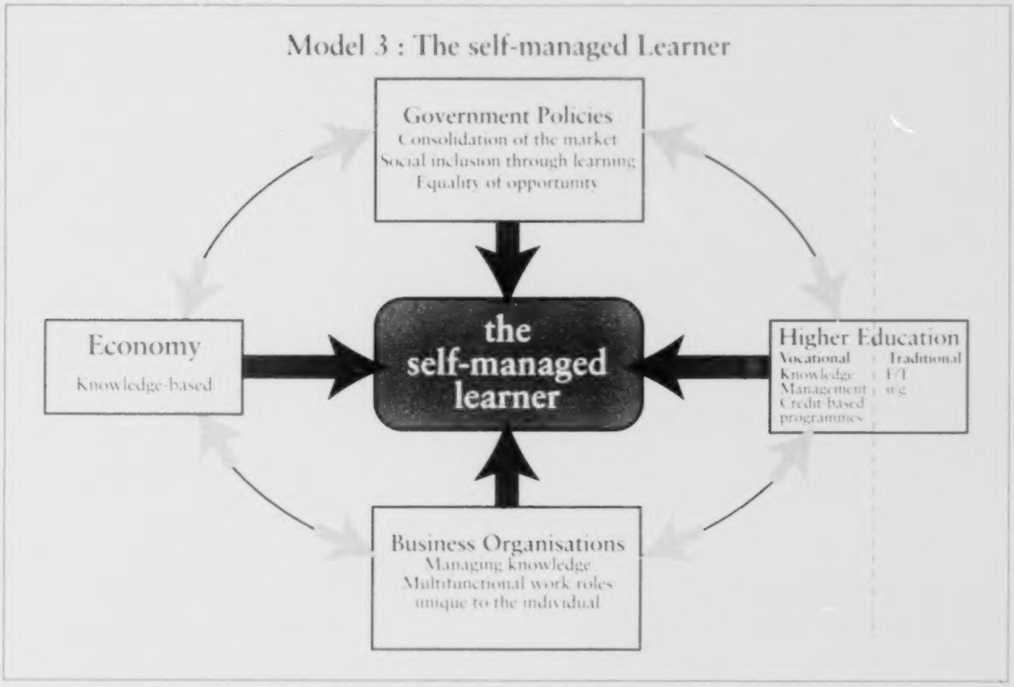
The consumers in this model are not primarily the learners themselves, however. The flexibility and transparency afforded by modular curricula was placed in tri-partite ownership: HE, organisational partners, and government agencies. Many organisations formed partnerships with institutions in order to deliver accredited programmes of work-based learning, either through the accreditation of existing in-company training programmes or by commissioning the development of specially tailored courses. Accreditation allows organisations to 'add value' to training and development initiatives by providing a credit incentive for employees to take up training opportunities. The potential for training to achieve organisational objectives is thus increased.

Many organisations, particularly traditional bureaucracies wishing to shake up and become more efficient and market responsive, saw NVQs as a tool for enhancing individual, and hence business, performance, and utilised them as a development and assessment framework for their employees.

In many cases, the result of such joint training and development initiatives has been confusing and disempowering for work-based learners. Organisational objectives (such as organisation-defined behavioural competencies; requirements for the demonstration of 'core values' or culture change indicators) are added to academic outcomes required by HE. In some cases, organisations have (in a well-intentioned way) offered the opportunity for employees to gain an NVQ concurrently with a related academic award. Consequently, learners have been faced with several layers of assessment criteria, some of which will inevitably conflict with one another, and none of which have been defined by the learner her or himself. Rather than being freed up through learning, learners may have become gridlocked within rafts of conflicting parameters overlaying one another. To return to the 'consumer product' metaphor, this product has been purchased on behalf of the learner, with the consequence that she or he has had little choice over what has been consumed, and may even have been force-fed.

Model 3: the self-managed learner

Current economic developments which are taking place, notably in East Anglia (for example, in 'Silicon Fen'), may drive against this excess of control over learners. The discourse of the 'knowledge economy' is replacing the discourse of 'chaos' as a force to be tamed. Rather than being invisible and 'underpinning', knowledge is cited as the key organisational asset with the greatest influence over competitive advantage (Harvey p. 159). Knowledge cannot be defined in discrete packages compatible with traditional subject areas. It does not remain static, but develops at an increasing rate. The pace of knowledge change, coupled with structural changes, such as the flattening and fragmentation of organisations, lead to greater complexity and diversity in the work of individuals at managerial and professional levels. For example, work roles can rarely be described as 'managerial' or 'technical' but are more likely to be a dynamic hybrid unique to that individual. It is increasingly difficult for any external agent, whether this is an employer or an HE institution, to define for the post-experience learner, what knowledge should be 'consumed'.


Model 3 : The self-managed Learner
Government Policies
Consolidation of the market
Social inclusion through learning
Equality of opportunity
Economy
Knowledge-based
the self-managed learner
Higher Education
Vocational
Knowledge
Management
Credit-based programmes
Traditional
F/T
u/g
Business Organisations
Managing knowledge
Multifunctional work roles unique to the individual

MODEL 3: THE SELF-MANAGED LEARNER

At the same time, the change of Government has altered the social agenda but continues the consumer model of the education/society relationship. The concerns of the present Government are to consolidate many of the changes that have already taken place to introduce a new social order based around the principles of equity and inclusion. However, social inclusion has to be gained by individual effort - so the individualism is still there. This stance is well summed up by Beck (1992):

> 'in the individualised society, the individual must learn, on pain of permanent disadvantage, to conceive of himself or herself as the centre of activity, as the planning office with respect to his or her own biography, abilities, orientations, relationships and so on.'

Accordingly, there are signs that some organisations are beginning to switch their focus onto the *process* of learning at individual and whole-organisation levels, and are relaxing their control over the *content* of that learning. As we have implied, this is sometimes followed through only in terms of the rhetoric, and what results could more accurately be termed a 'training organisation' in which control over learning remains centrally defined. However, if the learning organisation concept is followed through in spirit, the consequence must be the acknowledgement that the learner, rather than the employer or the institution, is best placed to define what needs to be learned and by what means. HE cannot support this process solely by offering its traditional 'product' of an array of modules containing defined content. It must, in addition, facilitate the process by helping students to develop learning skills and recognising and valuing these in their own right.

Through the Credit Framework for Industry Project at APU and the Individually Negotiated Master's programme, we have observed this as a possible emergent trend, and here will mention two examples.

We have used Independent Learning Modules (open-content credit-bearing modules in which the desired learning outcomes are learner-defined) to support action learning projects undertaken by senior social services managers. Projects included: research into ways of obtaining more meaningful stakeholder involvement in learning disabilities services; the effect of stress on staff sickness levels; and a piece of interesting 'detective work' investigating patterns of communication within the organisation which ultimately challenged its own notion that it is a 'learning organisation'.

Interestingly, while all of these projects were undertaken by experienced managers, they are notably un-*managerialist* in seeking to develop service delivery in a direct way rather than focusing primarily on management systems. The latitude given to students over the choice of project suggests that students' personal/managerial identity in the Beckian sense may be closer to the customer than is frequently asserted for managers.

We have also developed, and are piloting, similar open-content modules which provide a framework for undertaking Continuing Professional Development (CPD). The modules focus on the complete learning process itself, from identifying personal and professional development needs; crafting a personalised programme of study, which may include learning from a much wider range of sources than the traditional institutionally or organisationally prescribed courses; and undertaking and evaluating this experience. There is a small family of sibling modules utilising the same process but addressing the needs of employees working at different levels in academic and/or employment terms.

These examples illustrate the need for Higher Education to shift its view of its own role and purpose; rather than being the guardians of knowledge HE institutions need become facilitators of learning and knowledge management. At APU we have adopted the practice of developing 'open-content' modules based in the identification of learning outcomes which are sufficiently generic to enable learners to customise them in the light of their own employment and development needs.

Conclusions

The key features of the models we have described are set out in the table below:

	Model 1 trainee	Model 2 gridlocked	Model 3 self-managed
How the economy is construed	declining; Fordism	chaotic; turbulent	knowledge-based
Business agendas	struggling to cope with new global competition and declining home markets	to eliminate rigidity; to cut costs; to try to regain control	to be able to manage knowledge; to become an 'ideas factory'
Government agenda	to improve economic performance within Fordist parameters	to advance the free market and raise standards for global competition	to consolidate the new market economy; to achieve social inclusion through individual effort and responsibility for learning
HE curriculum response	introduction of vocational HE	to re-package the curriculum in consumer chunks; to privilege skills at the expense of knowledge	to cede control over content; focus on knowledge management and the development of effective learning skills
Knowledge	owned and defined by HE	underpinning competence and performance	a key asset; no longer the exclusive property of HE
Experience of the work-based learner	disempowered by external imposition of standards and lack of relevance to the workplace content of the curriculum	disempowered by too many externally imposed parameters	empowered to define learning needs but faced with responsibility for continuous professional development

FIGURE 5: THE MODELS COMPARED

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We have argued that the development of credit-based modular curricula in HE have not significantly enhanced learner-centred approaches to the curriculum; learners have had more choice about which products to purchase, but the form and content of the products has been determined by organisations, governments and academics. However, we have further argued that there are indications that the basis for a more genuinely learner-centred curriculum may now be in place: neither academics nor employers are in a position to identify curriculum packages and performance standards which will apply to the increasingly unique and multi-functional work roles which typify many modern organisations.

We have further argued that this has been facilitated by moves in Higher Education towards a more open-content curriculum in which the learner identifies the specific learning outcomes to be achieved. In this context, the 'modular' part of the credit-based modular curriculum in HE may continue, albeit with the content of modules less tightly defined. However, the credit basis of learning is likely to become more rather than less important, both as a means of recording and rewarding individual achievement and as a means of confirming the value and quality of the learning achieved. The continuation of the trends identified will nevertheless move Higher Education towards a situation in which it is confirming credit and credibility rather than managing the development and transmission of knowledge itself. These developments also seem poised to erode further the traditional distinctions between vocational, professional and academic programmes of learning.

Whilst we are optimistic that the recognition of a knowledge-based economy by employers and by HE, may track through to greater empowerment for work-based learners, we also suggest that there may be invisible boundaries to this empowerment. The open-content CPD modules mentioned above are being piloted with physiotherapy practitioners. However, the national requirements for CPD for the Professions Allied to Medicine are likely to be greatly influenced by the outcome of the enquiry into the 'Bristol case', which exposed a lack of basic medical competence among some doctors. This tragic and embarrassing crisis is likely to result in a seizure of control over the CPD curriculum by professional bodies, so that basic competence requirements can be hard-wired in, in an attempt to prevent a repetition of this disaster. If this case is generalisable, then it may be true to say that genuine empowerment may only be possible when the going is good.

Finally, having presented a view of work-based learners with greater potential than ever before to define the content of their own learning, we note the veiled warning in the quotation from Beck cited previously:

> 'in the individualised society, the individual must learn, on pain of permanent disadvantage, to conceive of himself or herself as the centre of activity, as the planning office with respect to his or her own biography, abilities, orientations, relationships and so on.'

The phrase of 'on pain of permanent disadvantage' suggests that whilst individuals have opportunities to become 'the planning office of their own biography', this comes at the price of a requirement to engage in lifelong learning. Failing to engage in learning and development throughout ones lifetime carries the risk of exclusion from the advantages associated with higher levels of employment. Opportunities for lifelong learning are growing and they are presented as the gateway to equity and social inclusion, but there remains a danger that lifelong learning may become a treadmill which it is impossible to get off.

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The Role of Learner Parents in Widening Participation

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Abstract

In the context of widening participation in higher education to under-represented groups, who are the agents of change?

This paper will explore the extent to which existing students are contributing to the process of cultural change in local communities through asking how the experiences of learning in higher education impacts on the wider role and relationships of 'non-traditional' students. The paper will explore the perceived connections between the experience of a group of former Access students now studying in higher education, and their attitudes and aspirations in relation to the learning of their children.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to begin to examine the link between the participation of learner parents in higher/further education and the role of these parents in creating and enhancing the aspirations of their children. It will describe and discuss a research project currently in progress which has been investigating the link between these two experiences across a sample of mature students in South Yorkshire.

The theme of intergenerational learning is rapidly gaining ground in policy developments in the education of both children and adults. Schemes building on this approach are already established in a number of LEAS, for example Liverpool, Sheffield, Derbyshire, Norfolk. The theme has emerged from growing concerns about levels of educational attainment in what is viewed as an increasingly competitive global economic environment in which high skill levels will be critical to future wealth-creation. However, exploration of the potential of intergenerational work between parents and their children has been largely focused on 'formal' learning processes, particularly within primary schools, and chiefly in relation to areas such as literacy and numeracy, where evidence of the link between low levels of parental literacy/numeracy and children's achievement gives cause for concern.

This paper focuses on the broader development of a home culture which supports aspiration and learning. Much work to promote intergenerational learning takes the form of professional efforts to develop remedial interventions through the institutions where parents are most visible, i.e. primary or, in some cases, secondary schools. This paper seeks to identify changes in parenting practices and understandings which emerge, not as a result of the such interventions, but as a consequence of the experiences of parents returning to learning in other parts of the education sector. It explores the broader development of a home culture which supports aspiration and learning amongst parents for whom recent experiences of learning may have contributed to changing their own views of education and its value for their children. The term 'learner parent' has been coined in recognition of the fact that, while the discussion seeks to explore links between the two identities, the focus in this discussion is on the parenting experience rather the learning experience of the participants.

The particular parents targeted by this research are from communities in South Yorkshire where patterns of education and employment have historically been defined by the dominance of local industries such as coal-mining and steel production. With the collapse of these industries in recent years, many of these communities are characterised by high levels of unemployment and increasing isolation. Statistics indicate that 77.4% of 16 year olds in the region stayed on in full-time education in 1995/6 as against the England average of 80.4%. This was lowest of all regional percentages (Office for National Statistics, 1998). Relative levels of participation in higher education by young people from the economically-depressed communities across the region are consequently low, which has implications both for the University's well-established mission to widen participation and extend opportunities, and for its recruitment strategies, if the current trend to more locally-based recruitment pattern continues. A range of national and local educational initiatives is in the process of being developed to address the issue of under-achievement amongst young people in the area. These encompass both major interventions of Education Action Zones in Sheffield and Barnsley, and local school-focused approaches (e.g. Sheffield Parents as Partners) The role of partnerships is strongly promoted, and the role of parents in the process increasingly highlighted.

Access programmes in FE Colleges continue, despite current anxieties about the effects of recent funding changes, to support high numbers of application for university places from working-class adults, many who have been unemployed or in low-paid work. Although post-code analysis of applications is not yet in place, experience indicates that many of these adult applicants are frequently from the very communities where aspirations among young people are lowest. Given their current involvement in learning, it would seem that an increased interest in education of those close to them might follow. This interest is likely to be an important factor contributing to the educational success of young people. Indeed, Feinstein (1998) argues that parental interest in education is the factor which influences the performance of the child rather than other factors which have been proposed, such as social group.

The link between the experience of learner parents in further/higher education and their role and behaviour as parents in influencing the choices and aspirations of their children has been hardly explored. This research set out to explore the extent to which learner parents consciously perceive this connection and the nature of its impact. It has grown out of observations of cross-sector work in Access and Guidance with both Access students and children from communities with low HE participation rates, and the need perceived to explore ways of understanding and developing its possible connection and impact.

Research Design

Parents return to learning in higher education in a wide range of contexts. Many of those in professional and related careers return to programmes of continuing professional development. Some return to follow non-accredited continuing education programmes for personal interest. Many are active in informal learning within their own communities through involvement in local activities. However, the group upon which this research focuses is the group for whom entry into higher education probably represents the most dramatic change in their lives. These are adults who, in many cases, left school with few or no qualifications, who for the most part had no aspirations or intention to participate in higher education. The learners targeted are currently studying on one year full-time Access programmes, with the intention of proceeding to a full-time degree programme the following year, or have already progressed into first year university education.

The research aims to investigate three main factors which might be seen to have a direct impact on the development of aspirations in learner parents and in their children:

- Parental influences on the early learning choices of learner parents themselves;
- Perceptions of learner parents' own role in influencing the choices of their children;
- The impact of learner parents' current learning experience on this aspect of their parental role.

At this stage, the research has been focused on exploring the perceptions of learner parents themselves. The preliminary research has been undertaken by means of a telephone survey based on a questionnaire administered to a total of 65 learner parents across further and higher education.

The questionnaire was structured around three broad areas corresponding to the categories identified above:

a. Learner attitudes and behaviour

Data has been gathered on the nature of parental encouragement to study post-16 which parent learners themselves experienced. It was important to avoid any implication that any forms of parental behaviour were less appropriate than others. A range of indicators based on the different kinds of active engagement entered into in the process of discussing the child's future was used to evidence patterns of practical support. The questions also sought to determine the age at which learner parents perceived parental influence to be most critical, as well as other influences which were perceived to be key.

b. Parental attitudes and behaviour

This area of enquiry has explored similar questions in relation to the learner's own current role as a parent and expectations/attitudes with regard to his/her own children. Again, care has been taken not to 'weight' differing forms of behaviour to infer that only some are imply adequacy in parenting. It was also important not to make the assumption that the experience of returning to education has had a beneficial effect on the experience of being a parent. Given the increasing pressure on students in relation to round-the-year assessment, and the generally high level of conscientiousness demonstrated by mature students, the role of sustaining an active parenting role could be perceived as problematic, and any kind of practical link hard to sustain.

c. Perceptions of the link between the recent emergence of learner parents' own aspirations and learning and that of their children.

It was likely (and appropriate) that the act of participating in the research would itself raise awareness of the connections between the two experiences. However, it was expected that responses to this would differ. In some cases, particularly for women, the act of returning to learning is about forging a new identity away from what may be the limitations of the parenting role and determinedly separate. It was hoped that sensitive questioning may enable any such ambivalence to be expressed.

Method of surveying

Meetings were held with students in five targeted FE colleges in the Region, explaining the research and inviting learner parents interested in participating to respond via a pre-paid reply system. These students were contacted and a suitable time arranged for a telephone interview. It was considered important not to exclude those who did not have access to a telephone: in these cases, the questionnaire was administered face-to-face. 153 responses have been received expressing interest in participating in the research. Of these, a total of 65 students have taken part in the survey to date: 25 Access students and 40 HE students. All the HE students interviewed were first year students at Sheffield Hallam University. The University has a high number of Access students who progress from FE colleges in the Region. Letters were sent to all local first year students whose highest qualification on entry was Access.

Findings

This is a report on work in progress and the process of collation, analysis and interpretation is only just beginning. Nevertheless, a number of themes are beginning to emerge which illustrate the role which learner parents are taking up and the experience on which their understandings are based.

Early expectations of learner parents

Responses to the question 'When you were in your last years of secondary school, what were your expectations?' indicate that most respondents took the term 'expectations' to mean 'high expectations'. Many responses were categorical and emphatic, implying not that courses of action existed which were rejected, but that choice of this nature was not there:

'None'
'None whatsoever'
'Nothing really'

It was evident from the responses that many participants grew up in communities where the economy at the time may have been perceived as stable and where patterns of employment and gendered divisions of labour were deeply rooted. Insofar as the term 'expectation' appears to have been taken as implying an anticipated change of some sort, it may be that the experience of continuity characterising these communities is remembered more vividly than any references to change. The concept of 'expectation' could also be seen as a class-based term, one which, in the context of this kind of discussion, is perceived to be a quality associated with high levels of education and middle class values. This may explain the suggestion of apology and discomfort in some responses for this absence at this stage in their lives:

> '..Oh dear, start with a hard question. Erm, not a lot, really. I wasn't very academic. I didn't have any expectations.'

The gloss of explanation that is put on these responses could also indicate that their relationship to the term and the concept of 'expectation' has changed since they have returned to education.

A second theme which emerged, not surprisingly, was that of alienation from school. Themes which emerged for many were those of escape or survival:

> 'I didn't have any expectations whatsoever, just to get out.'
> 'I just wanted to get out of the place as fast as possible.'
> '...to survive it. We were never told about the alternatives, that's just what we did. We didn't have any expectations, we were just cannon fodder'
> 'I just went along with it. I just went along with what was set out.'

There is a keen awareness of the lack of choice at that point in their lives, not only in relation to future opportunities, but also as young people compelled to participate in a project (school) which had little meaning for them. Education was implicitly a 'greater scheme' whose intentions and design they were subject to, and the experience of which was unsought and uncomfortable, but whose purpose was not apparent. The power of these descriptions may arise from the sharpness of the memories, but may also reflect a newly-emerged political understanding of the sociological and political meanings of education through which these memories have been filtered.

An alternative strategy to 'survival' was one of resistance through 'desertion', i.e. truancy. This stands in counterpoint to subsequent references to 'returning' and 'coming back'. For some respondents, this course of action may have represented some form of choice at that time in their lives. In contrast to other respondents whose strategy was to 'survive' but experienced little sense of choice as part of that experience, there appears to be an assumption here that this choice cut them off from any expectations which might have been laid upon them for the future:

> 'Mine were pretty low because I didn't go to school very often.'
> 'I didn't go so I didn't have any.'

Most do not give explanations for their truancy further than to imply it was a response to their negative experience of school:

> 'I played truant for two and a half years because I hated school.'

One respondent does attempt an alternative explanation by referring (possibly cynically) to current psychological explanations of 'school phobia'.

Aspirations of learner parents for their children

When learner parents were asked about their aspirations for their own children, most responded by relating the answer directly back to their own experiences of returning to learning. Many spoke about changes in their own perception of themselves as having the potential for academic achievement. One respondent linked this with the development of personal focus through 'commitment'. Another located her new sense of confidence in changes she perceived had taken place in the education system itself and wider availability of choice:

> 'Working people can be educated, now. It's not just exclusive to the middle classes. We can get it if we want it.'

This sense that it is now possible to have access to opportunities formerly denied to working class children is echoed by another respondent who remarked of her children that:

> 'I want them to know that they are as good as anyone else.'

A new sense of opportunity had led to a growing sense of her ability to influence the lives of herself and her children on the part of one parent learner:

> '..because I am feeling educated myself, more confident in controlling my life and the life of my kids. Because you're learning all the time.'

It is particularly interesting here that the sense of being 'educated' is experienced as continuing process, rather than a state of achievement, with an associated sense of empowerment which appears in much current literature on the desirable effects of lifelong learning. Conversely, the disempowering effects of early learning experiences for many learner parents echo current literature on the connection between low self-esteem and under-achievement in boys.

The actual experience of returning to full-time study is described by some respondents to have had a dramatically transforming effect:

> 'I never dreamt I would be able to do this and suddenly I realise I can.'
> '...the penny has finally dropped and now I think there are things other than tedious work.'

For some, returning to education has given them a wider understanding of the forces and pressures which produce the circumstances where learning is now seen as critical to individual and national success.

> '...because I've returned, I've seen both sides. Especially in this day and age, to compete in the job market they need extra qualifications.'

A wider view also empowers the learner to participate in creating his or her own understanding of the world:

> '...I think you are aware of an outside world as such. You realise that there are different views and you're not just spoon-fed things and think in black and white. You learn to question.'

This perception of the power of the learner contrasts strongly, of course, with the image of learners as 'cannon fodder' describing some of the experiences which learner parents themselves remember.

A wider view and experience of the world which can be passed on to the next generation also comes through academic achievement and social interaction at University. This respondent identifies the function of the learner parent both as academic role model and as agent of advice and guidance:

> 'Hopefully, I would like to think it would if they see me achieving and getting what I want. I have made more friends and my son has been into university and on the Internet. So he will definitely be more aware of what uni life is like. So yeah, I think it does. They have first hand experience from someone studying and they can ask you about it because you have got first hand experience.'

Links between the learner parent experience of learning and interest/role in their children's learning

A minority of participants perceived that returning to education had had a detrimental effect on their role as a parent:

> '..obviously less time for the children.'

Elsewhere the effect of the learning experience was perceived as neutral to both parent and child:

> 'The kids do complain that I'm doing too much homework but I don't think it affects them too adversely.'
> 'Well, it hasn't changed me, being a student. My opinions haven't changed in bringing up children because really I am the same person just trying to improve myself.'

Some respondents identified the tensions and difficulties inherent in sustaining both roles effectively, but nevertheless recognised that the negative effects were possibly balanced by a more positive attitude towards their children's learning:

> 'It makes me stressed out with very little time and hopefully makes me more encouraging as well.'

The majority of respondents drew a clear and positive connection between their role as learner and that of parent. This was observed to have influenced, first of all, levels of understanding of the learning process:

> '...because you are interested in education, you see what you can actually do.'
> 'I've always had a lot to do with the school, but it has made me much more aware.'

A range of examples offered illustrated concrete ways in which the parental role had developed as a result of engagement in the act of learning. These included an awareness of effective approaches to learning:

> 'It does when it comes to her getting her work done. She calls it nagging, but I know how she should approach it and get it done and if I hadn't done this course, I probably wouldn't have done.'

New insights into effective ways of supporting children learning have been discovered, whether through improved listening and feedback to the child:

> 'I think it has started me looking at things different. I was regimented before and now I am more understanding and give more information and reasons';

or through a more rigorous role in supervising performance:

> 'Definitely on the school work. My daughter's bringing homework home. I'll check it and go over it to get better marks.'

There is also evidence of wider influences on collective family behaviour which, in the context of the 'cultural change' being promoted as essential to lifelong learning, is perhaps most significant. This may be in relation to the time management and shared domestic responsibility which makes it possible for lifelong learning to take place:

> 'I have more discipline with them now, too. I ask them to help out.'

or the extent to which education is integrated into the daily routine of family life:

> 'Because I don't want them to go back as I did, so I encourage them. I take the time to encourage them and take more interest in their homework. I'll organise my time so education is the priority.'
>
> 'They see you doing homework so that becomes part of the family role so I don't have to scream at them to do it. Education has become part of the home social life.'

Conclusion

How might these tentative insights inform the task of widening participation in education generally, and in HE in particular?

A key plank of the current HEFCE strategies to fund widening participation strategies is the use of demographic data to identify communities where participation is low. The use of staying-on rates as an indicator of low levels of participation masks the participation of adult students from these same communities, albeit numbers may be small. As this survey has shown, it is possible to identify these learners. More to the point, it is clear that many of them would be very interested in exploring the dual role of learner parent. As part of the invitation to participate in the survey, we asked whether learner parents would be interested in becoming involved with other parent learners to explore how their own learning impacts on their children's learning and aspirations. Out of a total of 153 responses, two-thirds (102) expressed a positive interest. We have presented in this paper some initial evidence of the powerful impact which parental learning is having within many families. These individuals are potentially powerful agents for change within wider communities.

This data emerging from the survey challenges our institutions to recognise the student as a whole person. Many of our efforts in higher education are modelled on the experience of eighteen-year-old students leaving home for the first time. Our role in HE is to support them in building a new and independent identity as a student. At the same time, the profile of participation in higher education is dramatically changed to reflect the participation of adult students. While changes in curriculum structure, such as modularisation and semesterisation, have been argued for on the basis of introducing flexibility to respond to the needs of these very students, our preparation and induction processes do not recognise the complexity of identity for the many mature students who are parents, except as a problem to be addressed through child care support and careful time-tabling.

The focus in further, adult and higher education on achieving measurable outcomes, albeit key to the immediate task of widening participation, nevertheless masks the contribution made alongside other sectors of the education system to nourishing and embedding a culture of lifelong learning. In the spirit of 'joined-up thinking' and the recognition that lifelong learning and the commitment to widening participation are long-term processes, it is time to recognise the positive role which learner parents could play in this process.

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Equity And Inclusion In Home-Based Lifelong Learning

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Abstract

The paper gives an account of the Distance and Flexible Learning Unit in the Department of Continuing Education, Lancaster University. In particular it considers the philosophy and mission of the Unit - that it should (i) be experimental and developmental; (ii) target 'disadvantaged' and 'excluded' members of the adult population; (iii) create effective courses despite low budgets; (iv) emphasise mixed-mode delivery.

The experience of the Unit has raised significant issues which the paper explores. Is the effectiveness of a distance learning course related to the size of its set-up and maintenance budgets? Are some adults 'good' or 'bad' distance learners and, if so, what are their profiles? Do those profiles relate to other recognised social categories such as disabled persons or persons who are economically disadvantaged? And if so, does increasing emphasis on open and distance learning in higher and further education inhibit some adults? Is 'open' learning too 'open': is it more effective if targeted? Has the potential of learning based on information communications technology yet been properly understood: does the current rhetoric cloud actual drawbacks?

On-site or Off-Campus: Are they Equally Effective as Sites For Learning?

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Abstract

The University of Paisley has developed a portfolio of credit-rated modules designed to prepare students for higher education while giving them credit towards a subsequent award should they decide to continue with their studies. Successful completion of the module guarantees a place on a part-time study route within the University's Combined Awards programme. 'First Steps at University' is for adults without previous HE experience. The module is delivered on-site at each of the University's two campuses and off-campus within community setting where a viable number of students can be identified. This paper will examine the merits and demerits of on-site and off-campus delivery for this module and will compare and contrast the success and progress of students between the two settings.

IN COMMUNITY

Learning Strategies: Case Studies of Local Community Learning Initiatives

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Sue Gruellich joined Napier in 1990 as Industrial Liaison Officer in the PR & Marketing Department, following 10 years in sales and exporting in private manufacturing industry in Scotland. Having learned to understand the different 'language' of education she has become increasingly involved over the past four years in making links with the local communities surrounding the university and enabling Napier staff and community education staff to work together to explain and provide routes through the educational maze to further and higher education. She provides administrative back-up to the Napier teaching staff involved in local community learning initiatives and use every possible opportunity to promote this idea both internally and externally as a valuable contribution to widening participation in FE and HE by 'non-traditional' students on a long-term basis.
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Abstract

The paper will discuss the experience of teaching a Learning Strategies module to students in two communities in areas of deprivation in Edinburgh. Through partnership and a joint teaching programme with the community education centres this initiative aimed to enhance the study skills necessary for the students to progress to further and higher education courses. In addition it aimed to provide a sympathetic approach and environment in which to support and build confidence in students through interactive learning methods which made use of the students' own experience and developed groupworking skills. Universities have been encouraged to widen participation to groups who may be non-traditional entrants. The paper will discuss a number of issues relating to widening access and give examples from the case studies of the teaching and student experience. Time will be allocated to discussion based on some of the issues which were found to be relevant and contributions from the participants will be invited.

Introduction

The terms *access* and *lifelong learning* are now commonly used and many documents have addressed the issues surrounding them in relation to widening participation in higher education (Sand, B. 1998). Firstly this paper discusses some general points relating to widening access and lifelong learning and proceeds to look at case studies of an initiative taken by Napier University and Wester Hailes Community Education Centre in Edinburgh in 1997 to offer a learning strategies course suitable for students who had already taken some courses in the community and were considering further or higher education options. Further courses were run in two centres in 1998 which produced some similar issues but also some different experiences.

The course was also aimed at widening the horizons of participants and developing skills which would be useful to them in their own lives thereby increasing confidence to participate in decision-making in their own community as well as making further use of the facilities for learning in their area. Some of the issues resulting from the experience of running these both these courses will be discussed.

Community Education

> 'Through its commitment to learning as an agent for change, it supports the Scottish people to improve personal, community, social and economic well-being' (Community: change through learning, 1998)

Community education was at the cutting edge of the debate on widening access long before the government raised the profile of widening access and lifelong learning opportunities. Frequently working with small budgets and often working from shared premises, community education centres attempted to provide appropriate courses to people locally in a range of practical and interest courses. The courses which were student centred aimed to improve the quality of life for the individual by developing skills and personal confidence to cope with their life issues.

Frequently providing for people in areas of deprivation where a variety of health and environmental problems occur, community education has often given a life line to people desperately trying to become independent and improve their opportunities to gain employment or improve their quality of life, enabling them to cope more effectively with their situations and environment in which they live.

Further and higher education opportunities have generally not been perceived as the normal route for school leavers in areas of deprivation where family and friends may not have had experience of higher education themselves. The report on Participation in Higher Education in Scotland 1996/97 (SHEFC 1998) highlights the fact that there are many areas which are highly populated in Scotland, both urban and rural which are under-represented in higher education. While Edinburgh differs from Glasgow in having above average levels of participation, there are still postcode districts containing dense populations which show low levels of participation in higher education. The Lothian equal access programme (LEAPS) which is an initiative by a consortium of Universities and Colleges in Edinburgh has been involved in a project which addresses the issue of low participation in higher education from schools in areas where students have no family background of higher education and may be the first generation to consider this option (CVCP, *Report*, 1998)

Issues such as physical and mental health, unemployment, environment and low pay or dependence on benefits are all factors which may affect the way in which individuals view the relevance of educational opportunities which may be available to them.

In recent years the interest by mature people in taking courses has increased and with the links between community education, further education and higher education it is possible for non-traditional entrants to progress from different levels and routes to university courses in a way which was not open to them as readily twenty years ago.

In 2.3 of the vision statement of The Scottish paper, Communities: change through learning (1998) a key point alludes to the central role of Community based learning.

> 'Community based learning opportunities for all ages are as important to the realisation of our vision as schools, colleges and universities. The whole education system, with other public services and the voluntary and private sectors require to collaborate to realise it.'

Community education does have a vital role to play in providing often the first tentative step towards further or higher education. Collaboration with further and higher education and a developed understanding of the needs of potential students should they proceed are an important part of the equation if these students are to succeed in making the transition.

A number of recent Government papers on higher education and lifelong learning (Dearing 1997, Kennedy 1997, Opportunity Scotland 1998) have recommended and supported the idea of widening access and encouraged institutions to look at recruitment and selection policies to include non-traditional entrants. In order to support initiatives which help to widen access it is important to look at the needs of the students who may have had poor educational experiences in the past and lack confidence rather than ability to cope with further or higher education. Learning in the community is generally provided in a supportive small group environment with respect for the individual and an understanding of their particular situation in the community. Students are encouraged but not put under pressure.

There are clear difference in the approaches used in community education and higher education and therefore any discussion on widening participation must address the way in which transition can take place effectively for the individual students addressing their needs and goals. The Scottish office report (Communities: changing through learning 1998) suggests that the key issues for policy makers are lifelong learning, social inclusion and active citizenship. Community education is described as an approach rather than a sector, linking and collaborating with the needs of the whole educational system. The community education approach is concerned with individual development in the context of the life of the individual. This holistic approach is one in which higher education would subscribe to but in reality students may feel they are part of a mass education system which has less time given to the individual. Pastoral care provision and personal tutor systems try to address this issue. Napier University for example offers a bridging course to students who articulate onto degree courses from further education colleges with continuing personal tutor support. (Tait and Godfrey, 1998). This credited bridging course has been found to support students in the transition from further to higher education.

Transition from one sector or approach to another for students can in itself demand a shift in expectations relating to a range of issues including teaching and learning methods, flexibility or inflexibility of course content or student support mechanisms.

In order to implement policies and recommendations of the various recent reports and papers relating to wider participation, a clear understanding is necessary of the role of community education which has a broader remit than acting as feeder into further and higher education although these are important opportunities. Active citizenship and the ability to participate in decision-making at a local level on issues which affect peoples lives and learning for the sake of broadening horizons and interests are just as important as gaining credits if that is the choice of the individual.

Case Studies

In Edinburgh there are a number of areas of deprivation based on factors which include levels of unemployment, standard of housing and level of income. Two areas in particular are Wester Hailes, built in 1960s on the west of Edinburgh and Craigmillar, an older established area on the south east side of the City built in the 1920s. Both areas have received injections of funding to improve the environment and facilities locally but these are areas in which less than 16% of children go on to further or higher education compared with a City figure of 44%. Unemployment is also considered high at 14.1% compared to a City centre figure of 4.6% (1997/98 Wester Hailes Community Education Report) These areas are identified by postcode numbers in the SHEFC report, *Participation in Higher Education in Scotland 1996/97* (1998). In 1995/96 a distance learning package in Learning Strategies was developed with two other partner institutions under the Flexibility in Teaching and Learning Scheme (FITLS2). This project was targeted at unemployed people to enable them to return to work or education. This proved to be an interesting project, but the learning strategies course failed in terms of completion rates and this was the experience of all the participating institutions. It was found that students who had poor study skills needed face to face support and contact with other students rather than a distance learning approach.

Discussions in 1997 between Wester Hailes Community Education staff and Napier University resulted in the delivery of a ten week course in learning strategies aimed at students who had already been involved in community education courses and were thinking of either applying for further or higher education courses and wanted to build their confidence in studying, written and oral communication skills, or generally wanted to improve their learning strategies. In 1998 a further course was delivered in Wester Hailes and for the first time in Craigmillar. The groups of students were smaller than our original estimate of 20 and varied between four and seven so that individual attention was possible. These were normal sizes of group in the community but would be perceived as 'too small to be economic' in the university.

Recruitment of students

It was agreed that initially students would be approached by staff teaching in both communities as well as advertising the course widely in the areas. A larger number of students registered interest than the number who undertook the course. A number of reasons may explain this. Many of the courses undertaken in the community allow students to come and go with some flexibility, encouraging attendance and completion of work rather than using pressure. The learning strategies course expected full attendance and commitment and demanded a shift in gear in terms of studying time.

All students were given an interview to assess their particular educational needs and motivation and a number of those registering interest felt they could not make the commitment required at this stage. An open session was held for those students who were interested in joining the course which acted as a taster session without obligation to continue if the student felt it was not the appropriate course for them.

In Craigmillar reaching interested students was carried out through Craigmillar adult learning advice centre (CALAC). Publicity was available through the local libraries in both areas and some extensive leaflet door to door delivery was carried out in Craigmillar.

Educational profiles of students in both groups varied from no school examinations completed to those who had passed some Standard Grade examinations or Scottish Higher within the last decade. Some of the students were reluctant to detail lack of achievement in terms of traditional school examinations and many recounted experiences of poor learning experiences from school. All the students who enrolled on the course had already had some contact with the respective community education centres.

Funding

The funding was a joint responsibility. Napier covered the publicity costs and tutor costs from an existing budget allocated to wider access initiatives. The community education departments provided the teaching premises, a partner-tutor and creche facilities. The students paid no fees and were provided with all necessary course materials. The course was initially given eight credits as a validated course but since the university modularization scheme changed to using fifteen credit modules in 1997 the shorter eight credit courses have been withdrawn. In 1998 completion of the course certificates were given instead of credits. The issue of credits will be considered again when the course is reviewed.

Although it was felt that the course offered an opportunity to develop skills which would increase confidence and open up other educational opportunities it was realised that the numbers voluntarily coming forward would be small.

Collaborative approach

It was agreed that a joint teaching approach would be used with an equal input from the community education tutor and the Napier university tutor. This joint approach meant that many of the students were known to the tutor from the community which made it less intimidating for the students when they started the course. It proved to be a very positive learning experience for both tutors. Materials were used and developed with examples of both approaches to teaching in the community and in higher education. Each weekly programme allowed an opportunity for the students to give feedback on their progress with the weekly directed study tasks and any points they wished to raise with the tutor or the other students about the class.

It was noticeable that as students became less shy and worked together on group exercises their confidence increased and communication skills developed. Written work was of particular concern and demanded a supportive approach to enable students to write an essay which most of them found demanding. The group project was introduced once the groups were established and the students found the project challenging and demanding as it brought together a range of skills such as research, using the library, group discussion, written skills and listening and questioning skills.

The students were given one computer session aimed at demonstrating how to use a word processing package and access the world wide web at Napier University and had access to the computers and the library thereafter. In addition the students at Wester Hailes had access to computers in the Library.

The Learning Strategies Course

The course consisted of a ten week programme which required a commitment of two hours each week from the student to attend the class and to be willing to spend some time on independent study. The course included communication skills, written and oral and group working skills. Students developed library skills particularly as they researched material for the group project. Each class was interactive and had a complete programme of activities based on a skill area. The students were asked to complete two assignments, an essay and a group project which included writing a report and giving a group presentation based on the research carried out. Both these assignments were demanding and exposed the students to methods of teaching and learning which were often unfamiliar to them. Learning through activity and using the individual's experience was an important part of the programme and the gradual building of effective groups provided peer support for the students within and outside the class.

Outcomes for the different groups

Wester Hailes 1997/1998

All 11 students from two separate groups completed the course satisfactorily and only one student did not complete the essay due to a combination of lack of confidence and having a disability which although supported proved to be a barrier to completing the assignment. The students were highly motivated and supportive of each other while having a range of goals which they wanted to achieve.

The support was gradual and increased as the students worked on the project and recognised the importance of group skills and recognising individual skills and contributions to the whole project.

The feedback from students both from feedback questionnaires and group discussion indicated that it had been hard work but a worthwhile experience which had increased most students confidence to enrol on other courses or pursue community activities.

Visiting Napier University had been a memorable experience for those who were able to attend the computing and library sessions or attend a first year psychology lecture with eighty other students. It was less intimidating that the students had anticipated. Some of the further educational activities for these students are listed as follows.

Students who enrolled on further courses

- 1 student was accepted on the HNC in accounting at Napier University and proceeded to the combined studies degree programme;
- 4 students were accepted onto ACCESS courses at further education colleges in Edinburgh;
- 2 students went to do a course in the Department of Continuing Education at Edinburgh University (New Horizons course);
- 1 student felt that he had gained confidence to take a more active role in representing people with disability in the community;
- 1 student while valuing and completing the course did not want to pursue further study;
- 2 students continued to pursue interest courses in the community and felt that they would be more confident to participate in them.

Craigmillar 1998

Five students enrolled on the learning strategies course from a range of background and with different educational experience. The collaborative approach was used with the same Napier tutor but a locally based community education tutor from CALAC. The course used a similar method of delivery but the content or materials used had some variations. The students participated well in class and group exercises in general but a more complex mix of personalities affected the progress of some of the students and the group project proved problematic.

Completing the essay also proved a difficulty for some students who were articulate in presenting ideas but less confident in writing then down. Even with encouragement and support the lack of confidence in written skills was evident and was a barrier for some of the students. As completion dates approached the attendance of some students dropped and letters of encouragement to attend even if they did not want to do formal assessments did encourage some of the students to return.

Students who enrolled on further courses

Two students were accepted onto ACCESS courses. These students had clear ideas as to what they wanted out of the course and had already applied for ACCESS courses. These students completed part of the assessments but the group project was not completed due to difficulties which occurred in the group.

The other three students were much less confident and were not ready to cope with the assessed work under time pressures. Although enthusiastic about working on the group project initially, choosing the topic proved to be difficult to reach a level of agreement.

The tutors concluded that the students need more time to develop the skills without feeling the pressure of assessments. A two term course rather than one term might have met the needs of the students more effectively.

Conclusions

The collaborative approach of working with students in the community was a valuable learning experience for both tutors. It was found that in both groups the students needed a gentle and encouraging approach to support them in their learning. Many students had low self-esteem and needed support to build their confidence and enable them to carry out tasks and activities. The methods used in community education are more student-centred allowing flexibility, negotiation and consultation in the course content and learning process. These points are confirmed by the literature.

If students are to move from the community to further or higher education they must be exposed to methods that will facilitate the transition. The personal circumstances and life events of the students are key factors in student progress and require an understanding at an individual level. Developing learning strategies and skills should be valued in general to support students in their lives whether they gain employment or take up educational opportunities. (Sand 1998).

The motivation of students to want to go on to further or higher education and their awareness of what that might mean has to be explicitly discussed with the students so that they are prepared for the challenge and to take risks and understand how they can learn from their experiences and tutor feedback on their work.

Widening access to higher education is a gradual process of creating awareness and opportunities and will not necessarily be immediate but may take several generations for the process to succeed. Each generation may influence the next. Lifelong learning should encourage people to enhance their skills, to improve the quality of their lives at whatever age and enable them to become active citizens whether that is through the route of further or higher education opportunities or other initiatives aimed at preparation for employment.

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The Classroom as Community: Dynamics of Race and Gender

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Abstract

This paper will review concepts of teaching and learning in recent national policy documents such as the Booth report. It will address the implications for our work with part-time adult learners who have traditionally been in a minority in higher education. Using a case study approach and focussing on the inter-relationship between gender and race we will take a critical look at the concept of the learning environment as community. The paper will identify features of the learning process, with particular reference to the classroom environment, which contribute to the processes of inclusion and exclusion of adult learners. We will offer a participative workshop and invite the group to explore strategies for developing the theory and practice of equalities issues in staff development and training for teaching.

Introduction

This workshop is designed to offer participants an opportunity to think critically about the concept of the classroom as 'community'. We are particularly interested in thinking about how the dynamics of 'race' and gender intersect in the classroom and contribute to processes of inclusion and exclusion in higher education. As we are both involved in programmes for training staff in adult and higher education to teach we feel that it is important to find ways of systematically integrating issues of equality and diversity into the curriculum and classroom practice. As we engage with the participants on these programmes, many of whom have substantial teaching and lecturing experience, we have become increasingly interested in how participants interpret questions of equality and diversity and the impact this has on their (and our) teaching.

Like many in this workshop, we have found ourselves waiting with interest for the launch of the national Institute for Learning and Teaching. We hope the Institute will provide a space for thinking through anti-discriminatory theory and practice in teaching and learning. In this workshop we take a careful look at the emerging criteria for professional membership of the Institute, how issues of equality of opportunity and diversity are constructed and the implications for staff development and training for teachers and lecturers in higher education.

Context: institutional discrimination

It is worth reminding ourselves that there is an increasing literature on institutional discrimination in higher education. The evidence includes employment of staff and student recruitment through to discrimination in staff promotion, student degree results and graduate career opportunities.

Much of the literature on gender in academia reveals how white women are subjected to institutional and everyday sexism. There is an emerging literature on the sexism and racism experienced by Black and ethnic minority women academics and researchers. As we write the Policy Studies Institute is about to publish a report on how ethnic minorities are structurally disadvantaged in the academic labour force. Minority ethnic groups are under represented in UK academic posts, less likely to be in senior positions and more likely to be in fixed term contracts. The Macpherson Report investigating the death of Stephen Lawrence has redrawn our attention to the deeply embedded nature of institutional racism. Although the focus is on the police force other organisations, including schools, colleges and universities are reminded how racist assumptions and practices, attitudes and behaviour disadvantage Black and ethnic minority individuals and communities.

We suggest that social relationships of power and domination have a fundamental impact on the quality of teaching and learning. We need to identify and address these issues at the level of training for teaching. There is little UK research on group dynamics in university classrooms or lecture halls but for the purposes of this workshop we offer the extract from the THES printed below. It is intended as a trigger discussion on how gendered, sexualised and racialised differentiation occurs in the everyday experiences of staff and students in the senior common rooms, offices, bars and classrooms of our institutions. This extract has a particular resonance for both of us, although even though we are both women, we are differently positioned in relation to our 'race' and sexuality.

Universities Still Far From Sexually Egalitarian

> 'Confident female university lecturers are often seen as scary, aggressive or lesbians by their students, while the institutions in which they work are far from the sexually egalitarian places they strive to be, it is claimed. Tom Delph-Janiurek, a PhD student at Sheffield University has found that sexual equality in universities is still a long way off. Things are changing he said, but only slowly...His research also reveals how students view each other. Students consider it fine for female students to sit at the front of a class

> and say little, but if a male student does this he is often described by colleagues as 'wimpy or gay'. Real men sit at the back and make a noise it seems to be just like at school. If females do this though, it is seen almost immediately as aggressive or the sign of a lesbian. Universities are supposed to be disembodied spaces where gender does not matter. That is not the case at all' *Times Higher Education Supplement* Spring 1998.

The focus here is on gender and sexual orientation. No mention is made of the inter- relationship with processes of racialisation which no doubt has its own effectivity. Paul Allen (1997) calls for the 'need to act upon qualitative data that illuminates the kinds of day-to-day experiences that black students have to face while progressing through and leaving predominantly white higher education institutions for the labour market2. His research reveals that students felt they were constantly exposed to a subtle racism, 'the glance, the unsaid' and more explicitly a eurocentric curriculum.

Points for discussion

Practitioners and managers are invited to consider the implications for staff development and training. In particular the quality of teaching and learning and the issues it raises for the staff and student experience in HE.

The policy context: diversity and equality

Since 1996 two major reports have appeared on universities and equality of opportunity. The main focus was on recommendations related to the legal obligations of universities with respect to race, gender and disability.[1] No reference was made to sexual orientation, class or age. Recommendations were somewhat tokenistic but mention was made of new scholarship on equal opportunities, fair assessment, language bias, harassment and an inclusive curriculum to take into account the 'varied experiences and needs of ethnic minority students, students with disabilities and men and women'. The strengths and weaknesses of equal opportunities policy have been well documented elsewhere but for our purposes it is worth noting the way in which these reports set the tone concentrating on matters of access. Little attention, if any is paid to the 'hidden curriculum' operating in relation to both hierarchies of knowledge and everyday constructions of the 'other' in the student body and staff.

In 1997 Dearing reminded us that we are now working with an increasingly diverse student body. He exhorted us to:

> 'encourage and enable all students; be at the leading edge of effective teaching and learning; sustain a culture which demands disciplined thinking and encourages curiosity and challenge; be part of the conscience of a democratic society.'

When Booth published *his Report on Accreditation and Teaching in Higher Education* equalities were relegated to Appendix A. Booth and Dearing recognise that universities now contain 'non-traditional students'. Their struggle is with terms such as 'diversity', 'multi-cultural' and 'difference' which are used interchangeably, most often to describe Black and ethnic minority students. The assumption is that 'non-traditional' students are different from the mainstream whose homogeneity is unproblematised. The latest document from the DfEE *The Learning Age* (1999) offers a similar formulation. Drawing heavily on Kennedy (1997) and Dearing (1997) it highlights, rather arbitrarily, specific sub-categories under represented in higher education including:

> 'people with disabilities...'
>
> '...only 17% of those from semi-skilled and unskilled family backgrounds go on to HE, although 54% of young people from professional and managerial homes do so. Their relatively low participation results mainly from under-attainment at earlier stages of education'
>
> 'men and women from ethnic minorities are generally better represented in higher education than the general population, Bangladeshi men and women and Afro-Caribbean men remain under-represented.......
>
> '...men and women from the most deprived parts of the country'

It is undeniable that these groups and individuals have been excluded from higher education. As our discussion indicates it is also the experience of being inside the institution which is at stake. We take exception to the explanation offered which locates the reasons for under-representation in the individual or community rather than examining the institutional climate. We argue that any attempt at a strategy for combating exclusion must first systematically address patterns of structural disadvantage alongside how hierarchies of social differentiation between individuals and groups are constructed and maintained.

Outsiders on the inside

The problem of what to do with students on the 'inside' is becoming clearer as student numbers increase. Assumptions about the 'otherness' of students are resulting in hasty recall of the language of multiculturalism and diversity. The reports argue for pluralism, for inclusion, but at what cost? Discourses of individual difference construct individual students as lacking in certain personality traits (lack of motivation) and operate within a technicist model which assumes that the acquisition of study skills and techniques will solve any difficulties. The problem becomes not so much one of inclusion or exclusion but, one of 'normalisation', self-authorisation and regularisation. (Foucault, 1974). Liberal discourses of individual difference effectively preclude an exploration of hierarchies of power and domination and the social processes through which all actors (staff and students) are engaged in the reproduction of 'outsiders'.

Institute for Learning and Teaching

The criteria and competencies for membership of the ILT have been written in the wake of these Reports. In 1998 the ILT circulated an Initial Planning and Consultation Framework for comment. One of its criteria for Fellowship is that we should be able to create and disseminate innovations in academic practice and the teaching process. The difficulty is that innovations do not happen in a social vacuum. The degree to which our innovations are accepted will be contingent on how our authority is perceived or contested, our gender, 'race', age, dis(ability) sexuality and class.

A close reading reveals that the ILT consultative document reveals a limited understanding of the relationship between equality of opportunity and teaching and learning in a diverse community.[2] A general statement on equality of opportunity and empowerment is listed under 'Professional Values Underpinning Practice' and a link is made with health and safety in 'Maintenance of Student Support Systems'. Unfortunately we hear no more about how this might be reinforced through outcomes listed in other sections such as 'Conducting a Variety of Teaching and Learning Sessions' and 'Underpinning Knowledge'. In 'Current Understanding of How Students Learn' a deficit model of student learning includes 'causes of student's most common misconceptions, mistakes and learning difficulties' (dyslexia). This is listed next to 'multi-cultural/cultural differences in learning approach and relationships between teacher and student'.

These classifications are unfortunate to say the least. The documentation reinforces the pathologisation of students who are perceived as lacking 'cultural capital'. We also receive little help in understanding the ways in which staff from under-represented groups may also be exposed to direct and indirect challenges to their authority in the classroom and college. In our work as managers in continuing education we have considerable anecdotal evidence that tutors and lecturers who do not come from conventional mainstream backgrounds report that they often find themselves faced with a range of both subtle and overt resistance to their authority.

Competing discourses

Our readings suggest that these documents remain located in a liberal humanist vision of the academy as a neutral space in which freedom of speech, critical thinking and pluralism operate within a caring culture. The dynamics, challenges, disputes and resistances experienced on a daily basis in the academy are unacknowledged. Tensions experienced by staff or students are construed as problems in personal style or motivation. The emphasis is on individual solutions. In this context it is useful to remind ourselves how psychological discourses have come to dominate education. This is not the place to repeat the critiques of the ways in which psychology constructs its subjects and impacts on education through systems of classification have been offered elsewhere (Henriques 1984). However, Walkerdine (1995) reminds us that psychology cannot just be applied to education, rather education is the place where psychology produces 'truths' about learning.

These discourses contain attractive messages: students can learn despite their 'culture', teachers will be rewarded if they practice some teaching skills. The impact of cognitive and humanistic psychology is clearly illustrated in an emerging body of literature on how to teach in higher education.[3] Other authors, struggling to come to terms with an increasingly diverse student body, attempt to incorporate elements from feminist and anti-racist discourses (see for instance Biggs 1999). However, given the strength of psychological discourses it is not surprising that social constructionist accounts are absent or are perched uneasily in relation to competing radical discourses. We find that elements from critical or radical discourses on educational theory and practice are depoliticised, referenced to power and hierarchy are silenced or construed as matters for the individual. As Foucault (1972) argues 'every educational system is a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, with the knowledge and power they bring with them'.

Engaged Pedagogy

In our own understanding of how, as classrooms and the academy become more diverse, the politics of domination continue to be reproduced we have found it helpful to remind ourselves of radical, dialogical, progressive, feminist methodologies of teaching and learning. Hooks (1994) argues for an 'engaged and transformative pedagogy'. She points out that while we may wish to embrace 'cultural diversity' we may also have to confront the limitations of our training and knowledge, as well as a possible loss of 'authority'. Exposing ourselves to fresh truths and uncertainties may mean challenging those students who have traditionally held a dominant position in the group (including ourselves). This also means a shift in social relations in the classroom which can be both exciting and unnerving. We need to share and teach strategies for enabling students and teachers to work with and engage with the challenges and disputes which may arise through raising unconventional ideas and teaching methodologies. The challenge is to develop an engaged pedagogy in our teaching, training and staff development, one in which:

> 'the classroom, with all its limitations remains a location of possibility ... that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways of moving beyond boundaries to transgress.' bell hooks (1994)

Notes

[1] See for instance the EOC, CVCP and CRE Guide to Equality and Higher Education 1997 which draws on an earlier report on quality assurance and equality by the HEQC 1996.

[2] Since this workshop in April 1999 and in response to feedback, the ILT has withdrawn the detailed criteria for membership in favour of five broad areas: teaching and support of learning; contribution to the design and planning of learning activities; assessment and giving feedback to students; developing effective learning environments and student learning support systems; reflective practice and personal development. There is no reference to equality of opportunity or diversity in the ILT membership application pack.

[3] See for instance the 53 Ways To...series published by Technical and Educational Services.

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Issues In The Provision Of Education For Inner City Groups, Especially Community Development Groups

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Abstract

Adult education has been deeply influenced by the growth in women's community education initiative which has occurred in Ireland over the past ten to fifteen years. The learning from this has been applied to other situations, particularly with men and women who have experienced educational disadvantage. My research centres on the difficulties experienced by a group of people who participated in an adult education course which was designed specifically for them. The group comprised people who had left school early, after very difficult experiences in the classroom. The effect of the educational disadvantage was not simply a deficit in reading and writing skills, but also in attention, comprehension and cognitive engagement with the educational materials. However, all of them were extremely proficient in their work, and possessed a deep understanding of their environment situation. This paper will explore the issues in the provision of education for inner city groups especially for those who are engaged in community development work.

Introduction

This paper considers the community education sector as it developed in Ireland over the past twenty years, for community development. Community education manages to bridge the perplexing gap between the personal and social in a tangible way. Education is a central institution in Irish society, and can be regarded as the primary route to the redistribution of resources and the provision of equality of opportunity for the members of Irish society. Adult education is increasingly seen as the way in which the benefits of education can be spread over the entire life time of the people, especially those who might not have been able to avail of education, first time around. The Green Paper on adult education, *Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning* (1998) stresses that adult education can play a vital part in addressing social and economic needs of Irish society, especially when Ireland has lower levels of education and qualification compared to most other OECD populations (p.7). Adult education also has a role in enriching the lives of people, providing education for its own sake and in mobilising the NGO sectors to influence creative and innovative development (p. 9).

This paper looks at the growth of this sector and the learning that emerged from it. It highlights the methodologies that developed as a result, and the ways in which these have had far reaching implications in education for marginalised and disadvantaged groups in community development. In the paper, I draw on the experiences I have had within community education. I look at models of community development as a means of addressing class issues in the inner city, and I examine the contentiousness of gender in the overall framework. Finally, the paper endeavours to point the ways in which these problems may be addressed.

Community education: women's experience

From very tenuous beginnings, women's community education has mushroomed to form a formidable force in Irish society (Connolly, 1997). This force can be interpreted as the engagement of ordinary women with the women's movement, extending the ownership of the movement, from purely academic and public arenas, into the lived lives of ordinary women. It has enabled women to see themselves as active participants in Irish society, women who might otherwise, through socialisation, and marginalisation, be perceived as domesticated and operating only within the private sphere. It has managed to emancipate women to a certain level of citizenship, which they have been denied, in spite of legal and social change. The women's community education movement has had far-reaching implications for Irish society, which can be seen by the inclusion of women's issues on the political agendas and the participation of women in more public roles.

The approach developed within the community education sector endeavoured to value all participants, but resisted to temptation to affirm the participants, unconditionally. Rather, the aim was to question and interrogate the beliefs and attitudes that the members held. The educational setting was designed to enable people to think and feel in a significantly different way. It was to be different from formal education in that the acquisition of information was merely part of the process rather than the main thrust. Community education is underpinned by Freirean principles of praxis and conscientation. (Freire, 1986). Freire's work in community based education was shown to challenge power relations, while situating education at the centre of social change. That is, he considered that education could be a force for redistributing power and privilege, but that it could only happen with an emancipatory pedagogy. Otherwise, it would merely reinforce the status quo. This pedagogical approach is dialogical, and it encourages students to reflect on themselves in the context of class and society.

Conscientisation and consciousness raising are primarily experiential processes: emotional, psychological, and cognitive. (Connolly, 1996) The experience of sitting in one of these groups is very empowering, enabling one to express ideas and to test one's thoughts in relation to others. Emanicipatory education is the process which enables people to raise awareness, to reflect and to bring about change (p. 38).

The basic methodology of emancipatory pedagogies and community development is human or relationship centred group work. This is founded on principles of inclusion, influence and positive regard. Elsewhere, (Connolly, 1999), I evaluate this from a feminist perspective, but the point that I wish to make here is that human centred group work has been refined and enriched by the practice in women's community education.

Community Development in the Inner City

Social inclusion is at the basis of the state interventions designed to address inequality. Community development is perceived as a way of meeting the needs of marginal, excluded groups. In addition, it develops the microcosmic experience of inclusion and influence. This relationship-centred process is at the heart of social analysis and education for politicisation.

Hope and Timmel (1995) see this as a vital part of adult education, if it is used to build unity and commitment (p. 29). It is a deeply political way of being, examining issues of power and authority. It endeavours to provide participants with the tools to exercise their own influence. Also, it helps to overcome the problems of shared leadership: stagnation, disunity, accountability, and just running out of steam.

Key Factors in Women's Community Education

Linda Connolly identifies this as part of the women's movement, the model of social movement organisation, which brings about social change. There are several key factors in the women's community education movement, which have emerged over the growth of the movement. Firstly, it is owned by the participants. Women simply set up daytime classes in their own areas, using local accommodation, whatever was available, but maintaining ownership of the process. This leads to the second factor: it is underpinned by the notion of agency. Sisters are doing it for themselves. The need for outside agency is reduced and self-reliance and control is enhanced. This in itself is hugely important. The founders and organisers are agentic in that they maintain the control as far a possible, working with Adult Education Organisers, co-ordinators and key local people. In this way, they were able to conduct the provision and process in the way they wanted.

Thirdly, they are focused on themselves as subjects. The curriculum and the process of the education is women-centred, with their own experiences, interpretations and insights at the basis of all the learning. Consciousness raising begins with the analysis of lived experiences and subjectivity is a distinct shift away from the principle that knowledge is located through logical objectivity. However, I agree with Ryan (1999) that this does not collude with the notion that women's ways of knowing are essentially different. Rather, women have different experiences, ways of learning and knowing because of social factors: women's lives are different because of social construction.

The fourth factor, in which the facilitation of the groups remains in the hands of the groups. While the content of courses given has an existence outside of the life of the group, the way in which it is imparted, remains in the control of the participants. The development of human centred, empowering methodologies is indebted to the kinds of processes, which happened in these rooms and halls around the country.

Another outcome, though not necessarily in all cases, is the way the groups identify with each other and in which networks emerged and were replicated. This identification of equality, commonality and collectivity, whether it was purely spontaneous or fostered by funding, clearly highlights the social and cultural impact of the phenomenon. What emerged is a totally new, creative, innovative and enriching phenomenon.

Implications for education provision for inner city groups

Within adult and community education and community development, and other training bodies, this phenomenon was extremely influential. In particular, the continuing education of marginal groups such as unemployed men, people with disabilities, lone parents, urban and rural communities and so on, was influenced by the methods and content of women's community education. The continuing education provision of the Adult Education Centre, Maynooth, clearly shows that the demand for these kinds of processes has had wider recognition.

Community education is viewed as an approach rather than merely a system of provision in the 1998 Green Paper, *Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning*. The Green Paper highlights the factors in this approach, indicating a strong overlap with women's experiences. It is located in the community, with local groups taking responsibility. These groups are formed around community issues and benefit in responding to the issues locally. Again, it is based on an empowering process, underpinned by the concept of equality. The question of power distribution is central, and the location of control ensures that it maintains an aspiration towards empowerment. This necessarily means that it is an agent of social change. Every shift away from centrality and towards the local response is another dent in the hierarchical power structures. Finally, it is modelled on active participation and inclusive decision making (p. 89). This is a 'bottom-up' process. The key players are those who partake in the educational project, rather than those holding authority or social power.

Community Education in a Broader Context

For many F.A.S.[1] trainees, people with disabilities in rehabilitation centres, unemployed men, Travellers, and other groups who lack social power, education and training is generally provided with the 'top-down' approach. This means that an authority, e.g., the training agency, the curriculum development unit, and so on, perceive that it knows what participants want and need. These groups then became the consumers - not the agents - of other people's education and training. Not everyone in the community education sector has the wherewithal to be agentic, but it remains a potential: the conditions that enable the process remain. This has impact of ensuring resistance to form, structure, systems, assumptions, and knowledge. This possibility does not exist for the consumers of other education provision. They fulfil the requirements set out in the beginning, using active learning methods, but staying within the dominant discourse. This dominant discourse, liberal education, has been shown, convincingly by Kathleen Lynch (1989), to ensure the status quo.

The Glass Fence

I describe this as the glass fence. The glass fence is similar to the glass ceiling, in that we can see through it, but we can't get through it. The mainstream can look in through the fence, observe the group work based methodologies, and they try it out in their own contexts. Likewise, the students can see out through the glass fence and note the changes that are made in other milieus. However, it serves to keep each group confined to its place. It isolates the participants within and it enables the community education sector to be scrutinised and checked. This glass fence is the constraining force, against which many social movements collide, when they encounter resistance to the status quo. For community education, it has been erected by the dominant discourses, which endeavour to protect the privileged, ensuring the dividends of belonging to the dominant groups remain intact. Within the glass fence, the empowering processes may enable people to perceive themselves in a completely different light, giving them the wherewithal to critically analyse their condition, and subsequently, to deconstruct traditional social relations. But the glass fence ensures that it remains within. It is not possible to act in an influential way in the larger context. While we have seen many changes in Irish society, the continuance of deep divisions is proof that the formidable forces against change. In spite of the explicit agenda of education as the route to the redistribution of resources, the glass fence ensures that the processes of community education do not percolate outside, to any great extent.

Community education is not a series of techniques which can be employed in any context or setting. The learning is that the visible is only part of the process. The group work that forms a key part in community education is underpinned by a philosophical positioning. While the underlying philosophy may not always be obvious, it is important to recognise, in Freire's words, neutrality is not possible. It is well documented that not all women participating in community education would describe themselves as feminist, but they would hold that the process is one of liberation: they are empowered, enabled and freer as a result of their participation in it. The tendency is towards an enhanced social position, with more access to power and resources. However, the application of these processes to other contexts does not always carry this agenda. In particular, education and training for disadvantaged people is underpinned by the notion that employment is the key to participation, resources, and independence. It should be possible for marginalised individuals and groups to use community education to relocate themselves in Irish society. However, the means to do so is very much within the ambit of the local: it is virtually impossible to tackle the national.

Community Education for Community Development

Community education has shown itself as a vital component in community development. The pedagogical approach in community education is based on using the group as the key resource. Human centred group work is consequently pivotal to the process and has implications for wider applications. My own work in education for community development is premised on this concept of group work as an emancipatory adult education methodology. Community development is also influenced to a significant degree on the processes in community development or the way in which community development is done, especially in the light of Community Action Network (CAN)'s work (Kelleher and Whelan, 1992). This process orientated aspect contrasts with other models of community development, in particular economic or structural models.

As a practitioner, some of my work entails organising community education for community development. This consists of courses taking place in communities, for people who wish to consolidate their skills in community development. This programme is funded by Area Based Partnerships' and some voluntary agencies. The groups are mixed: men and women, all ages and backgrounds.

Courses have been gender proofed, and course organisers have endeavoured to create the environment for emancipation. It is underpinned by the thinking in community development, that of people coming together to meet their own needs, bringing about change in the institutions at social and cultural levels. The participants are both the subjects and the actors in the whole process.

The evaluation of this programme highlighted a number of very interesting aspects of gender, which have implications for community education in general. It is all the more interesting, considering its origins in the women's community education sector, which it could be assumed, might have protected it from other agendas. It is very striking that, of all social inequalities, gender has remained the most contentious. This depends on the strand of community development the participants identify with. Two strands in particular throw up this gender aspect: traditional rural development which is largely about modernisation and bringing the benefits of technological and economic developments to rural Ireland. It is likely to be a force for dominant political and economic discourses in the more conservative rural communities. While the position of women may shift from the traditional private, unpaid labour role, to more public, waged one, the fundamental gendered social divisions are not countered by this shift. In addition, it is perceived that the aspiration of equality undermines the facets of rural life that the development seeks to retain as foundational precepts.

The second strand of community development which has gender implications is the urban labour movement based one. This sees class as the inequality they are concerned with. Feminism is perceived as middle class and therefore part of the problem. Gendered divisions are perceived as secondary to class. Feminism, in this strand, undermines the effort to seek fundamental change. Within this strand are the more recent community responses that are very patriarchal and structured and which concern themselves with solving community problems, sometimes through violence, such as drug misuse and joy riding. In some of these cases, initiatives set up by women in response to these issues have been colonised by these groups.

Another factor, which has emerged more recently, is part of the broader cultural and social discourse. The anti-feminist backlash is gaining a foothold. The powerlessness which many men feel as a result of the economic and social changes is now attributed to the women's movement, underpinned by the concern that feminism has gone too far. The changes in parenting, in personal relationships, in jobs and employment are perceived as detrimental to men as a group and as undermining masculinity. John Waters, for example, blames the women's movement for the changing role of men in family life. Further, he holds that women's employment and the desire for childcare is embedding capitalist economic values in Irish society, (Irish Times, 1999). In taking this position, he completely overlooks the role of successive governments, financial institutions and social policy and the part they have played in establishing the liberal economics which prevail in society This thinking is percolating through to some men's groups, who are using group work, community development and adult education to build a men's movement which aims to counter the progress made by the women's movement. It is important to point out, though, that not all men's groups are anti-feminist. I merely want to document the anti-feminist backlash and how it is relevant here. This thinking has the role of confirming the anti-emancipatory practices in some community development and education. This area needs careful analysis in specific research dedicated to it.

The Implications of Funding

There is also a problem with the way in which funding is acquired. While some partnerships are very supportive of this model of emancipatory education, other funders seek provision, which is underpinned by an economic model of community development. While some economic models, particularly those underpinned by community enterprise, do succeed in raising awareness and consciousness, the mainstream economic models adhere to traditional thinking.

However, whatever the model of community development, there are important positive features. The impact of community education on the women is hugely significant, with women reporting the change in their lives, the building of confidence and esteem, the sense of themselves as women emerging form the domesticating cultural imperatives. These personal changes are also noticeable among participants of other provision. Most report the personal developmental outcomes. However, it is at the social and cultural levels that more needs to happen to bring about the redistribution of resources and the changing of institutions.

More could be learned from the women's community education movement. A consciousness raising and transformative pedagogy is essential. But if women are to be included in the process of egalitarianism, a feminist pedagogical stance must also be taken. Unfortunately, that might be just too much for some people.

Conclusion

This article endeavoured to explore the implications of community education for participants, as an approach which has the potential to bring about fundamental personal and social change. It looked at emancipatory processes, which endeavour to bring about personal change, equipping participants to engage with the cultural and social discourses which undermine emancipation. While the philosophy of community education may not have had an explicit feminist agenda, the women's community education movement has ensured that all thinking on adult education and lifelong learning is influenced by the creativity and innovation that emerged from it. The Green Paper is imbued with the spirit of this movement, taking into account the changes in theory and practice that resulted.

However, the evaluation of a community development programme showed that gender remains a highly contentious issue, in spite of gender proofing. It highlighted a number of strands of community development, which have gender implications, stressing the need for further study. In particular, this paper pointed out that emancipatory, transformative pedagogies, when they are enabled to happen, need to embody a feminist aspect, without which women will find themselves in subordinate roles, once again.

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FAS is the statutory training agency and employment service.

Area Based partnerships are set up to enable communities to develop, with the help of funding from Europe, as well as some central funds

Action Learning For Local Development: A Community Based Project In Coventry

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Jane Watts is currently employed by Coventry City Council Community Education as Research and Development Officer, European Projects. The post involves working as a participant researcher/advisor within two projects, co-financed through Integra (EMPLOYMENT - ESF), Action Learning for Local Development and Key Skills for Tomorrow. The projects are community based and targeted at long term unemployed people. Both projects are run in partnership with voluntary organisations. Jane's previous experience is in the field of co-operative enterprise and community based adult learning and development work. She is interested in Freirean education and feminist approaches to learning as well as an eclectic range of interests in the adult learning and local economic regeneration fields.
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Abstract

EMPLOYMENT is a Human Resources Community Initiative of the European Social Fund and comprises 4 funds targeted at people who are 'socially excluded' / excluded from the labour market. The Integra strand of EMPLOYMENT is intended to look at so-called 'hard to reach' groups of long term unemployed people and to investigate ways to combat social exclusion. The workshop will consist of a brief introduction to one of Coventry's Integra projects, Action Learning for Local Development, highlighting any emerging good practice and raising some of the more thorny problems encountered along the way. This will, I hope, then give an opportunity to discuss some of the practical and ethical issues involved in this work and to broaden the discussion so that colleagues can contribute ideas from other initiatives aimed at combating social exclusion in order to inform the wider policy debate.

Introduction

Action Learning for Local Development is a partnership project based in Community Education in Coventry. The funding comes mainly from Coventry City Council and is co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) - Community Initiatives - EMPLOYMENT - INTEGRA. The lead partner is Coventry Community Education and partners include voluntary and community organisations and Coventry University. The ideas for the project grew out of a previous partnership project which took place in the first phase of Integra funding (1995 - 1997).
ESF EMPLOYMENT projects must be innovatory, transnational, bottom-up, have a multiplier effect, and be mainstreamable and disseminated. The EMPLOYMENT programme (1994 - 2000) is aimed at tackling the effects of social exclusion on the labour market - and 'reintegration' into it. The fund comprises four strands: HORIZON (people with disabilities), YOUTHSTART (young people), NOW (gender equality), INTEGRA (social exclusion / people disadvantaged in the labour market / long term unemployed). Coventry Community Education is involved in five Employment projects: Action for Access (Horizon), Women Tel-IT (NOW), Choices (NOW) - a

programme for parents, Key Skills for Tomorrow (Integra) Action Learning for Local Development (Integra). The two Integra and the Horizon projects are run in partnership with local voluntary and community organisations, and also with Coventry University.

Target groups

Action Learning for Local Development works with: very long term unemployed people; ethnic minorities - including groups of Asian women and a project in Coventry's Bangladesh Centre; lone parents and people with caring responsibilities; maintained and former drug users; residents in neighbourhoods facing multiple disadvantage; adults recovering from/experiencing mental illness; people with low basic skills; members of small, emergent or vulnerable community associations on targeted estates; people with disabilities; people with very low confidence levels and whose previous experience of education/schooling may have been negative; people who need the flexibility of a community based approach and who may need the additional support and encouragement; people who do not feel safe in venturing too far from home; people who have qualifications gained in other countries which are not recognised in the UK and/or do not yet have the English skills to make full use of their existing skills.

The project's aims to combat social exclusion through capacity building, innovative and holistic approaches to community regeneration and sustainable economic development through learning, getting people involved in learning, influencing change amongst providers and other institutions and steps for individuals towards paid employment / vocational education and training. It should be noted that in the context of the Integra project which despite a stated focus on regeneration there is still a focus on individual beneficiaries (learners) and outcomes for them. Focus on development and on Action Learning.

There are 10 local actions forming the project and the partnership. As examples note the capacity and employment development programme at Coventry Bangladesh Centre, the over-50s project which includes people aged 50+ being trained as mentors for the group and Adept's project which takes on as employed trainees a small group of local people training to be community development workers in their own communities. (A pack giving details of the projects was available at the workshop.)

Transnational partnership: partners in Spain, France and Ireland and part of a much bigger network - AGIR 2000 which includes the other Coventry Integra project. There are 5 transnational working groups all producing reports or products and some working with an action learning methodology.

The project has policy links at both national and local levels: for example with the Government's Social Exclusion Unit's work; lifelong learning policies; with national employment targets and with national education and training targets as well as with initiatives such as Coventry's Community Plan and Area Co-ordination. There is contact with a number of widening participation / provision initiatives noting the need to look more carefully at who is 'excluded' and what steps are needed to challenge exclusion.

Emerging issues of interest:

The use of Action Learning within the project

- to strengthen the partnership;
- to aid shared learning / development of learning and knowledge base;
- to support the project development and resolve problems by joint effort as they occur;
- to aid dissemination of each project's work;
- Capacity building;
- in community and voluntary organisations - both partner organisations and those who come into contact with the project as secondary or primary beneficiaries;
- a recognition that providers - e.g. community education itself also need capacity building - both in terms of better understanding of some of the 'hard to reach' target groups and the need for flexible / appropriate provision;
- Partnership itself and the challenges it can provide to accepted ways of working and the new insights offered. Since this is not the first such partnership of this type for the majority the insights this time are less surprising to many but are deeper on the whole because of the AL sets;
- Employment and employability- a wide ranging debate about definitions and our role in meeting these outcomes - the unspoken preferred option etc.

Different approaches across the projects

There is a potential clash between regeneration, community development and the focus on employment, employability and the labour market. This emerges as a discussion point at frequent intervals and formed the underpinning basis on which this project was constructed. It is felt strongly that many projects which have are targeted at unemployed people are aimed at the individual and tend to individualise both the unemployment and the job search or training. The emphasis on community development / regeneration and capacity building in this project is an attempt to look holistically at poverty, unemployment and disadvantaged communities and to look for solutions within them by building on strengths and trying to achieve some measure of sustainability within the work. It also recognises that in many of the communities where the project activity takes place, there are no or few jobs and that employers may be reluctant either to move into those areas or to employ people from them. Work is also taking place with employers to challenge these attitudes and to engage them in a greater involvement. The routes to employment are unlikely to be 'traditional' if this indeed still exists.

- A culture of change;
- A key question for the project is: creating a culture of change - how do you do it?
- Bottom up methods are being explored at transnational level. Attitudes within Community Education itself and within the local authority are also considered. The project has to be about more than just attaining the targets.

In summary the project is attempting to:

- explore the difference between development and engagement;
- use people's own experience and base work on the direction they want to take not on our pre-

determined outcome - this represents a significant shift in Community Education's actual practice - though not in how some practitioners would have described it;
- explore genuine progression and horizon-expansion for the learners;
- embed work into local communities so that it doesn't 'disappear' at the end of the funding which has been a problem within regeneration initiatives;
- capture and use learning and disseminate or at least share practice learning - the local authority in particular seems to be resistant to practice learning - it can tend to see this as a clash with its 'democratic priority setting'. Other institutions too tend to be very set in their ways.

The difficult issues so far

- unexpected - early in the project another part of the local authority cut the funding to lots of local economic / community economic development organisations, a few of which were direct partners and others which were almost all involved at the indirect level - e.g. in mini-partnerships within each of the 10 local actions;
- expected - the usual barriers; the issues around employment - outcomes versus process;
- the role of the unofficial economy;
- ethical issues around, for example, potential beneficiaries who are part of the unofficial economy;
- difficult collaboration between some projects and some other agencies e.g. Employment Services - the 2 workers who have most contact report a sort of competitive environment in which they are perceived as 'stealing outcomes'. This puts a strain on attempts to work in closer co-operation.

Successes

Successes of the project so far include:

- high levels of co-operation between partners;
- good shared learning and development of good practice;
- individual outcomes can and do include progression to Access to HE / FE / Education or training options / taking part in voluntary work in communities / community enterprise etc. as well as trying to find paid work;

Lessons

The lessons from the project so far (at the half-way stage of the project) are much as expected: - short term funding is not very helpful, whereas this sort of work requires longer;

- the emphasis which these funds place on innovation is not always appropriate, yet they are often the only source of funding which can meet the extra cost incurred when trying to meet more fully the needs of these target groups;
- work on equality issues - can't and shouldn't stop now;
- need to find ever more flexible modes of delivery at this level;
- inflexible funding regimes, which can mean that the needs of these target groups continue to be unmet or only partially met especially once projects try to mainstream or continue successful projects;

- inflexible institutions and systems, especially amongst some agencies working with unemployed people;
- many so-called 'partnerships' are structurally incapable of being genuine.

Partners are also learning the lessons of challenging and questioning and becoming more reflective in their practice through the action learning element, which also serves to attempt a more genuine partnership - a meeting of minds and a supporting of mutual learning.

Further information about Integra projects in Coventry is available from Sally Giles, Project Manager, Community Education, New Council Offices, Earl St, Coventry, CV1 5RS. Phone 01203 834030.

A Kind Of Higher Education For Adult Learners In Community Settings

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Abstract

There has been much discussion in recent years about what shape a mass higher education system might take in the UK. Some have argued for a HE system which meets the needs of adult learners (NIACE), others have argued that higher education should model itself on the CE system of provision (Watson and Taylor). Others have claimed the need to preserve an intellectual model of learning that is distinctively 'higher' (Barnett).

The facilitators of this workshop invite you to devise your own kind of higher education. We will then present our own version of higher education which is designed to cater for the needs of adults who choose to learn in their community locations. You will be encouraged to critique and discuss its viability for a future kind of higher education.

Workshop style (45 minutes)

- 5 mins presentation of key features of literature regarding future kinds of [mass] HE;

- 10 mins group discussions to devise own HE frameworks for mass HE;
- 10 mins feedback;
- 10 mins presentation of Lancaster University's Community Access Programme's key components for a kind of higher education;
- 10 mins response to CAP version.

[Editors Note: thanks are due to the authors for allowing us to reproduce the book chapter on which the conference workshop was based]

This book explores some ways of making higher education accessible and relevant to adults who are least able to benefit from its present, institutionalised format. The book takes its title from a 1993 NIACE policy discussion document on adult learners and higher education. The NIACE debate is expanded with reference to more recent commentary on the emerging shape of a future, mass higher education system. The book tries to put higher education for adults into an inclusive, lifelong learning context. For instance, what can be claimed as distinctive about higher education when it engages with mass participation? What are the qualities of a flexible, credit accumulation programme in a higher education framework? What are the implications for teaching and learning when participants take part from disparate starting points? Indeed, how do we square the localised, non-technological learning worlds with the fast moving systems of communication to which higher education aspires?

We, the authors, have been working with adult learners in their community settings for between five and seven years. At he time of the action research we were based in the Educational Research department of Lancaster University. Our work comprised both course provision in negotiation with a number of community groups and a range of inquiries into the nature and effectiveness of that provision. We do not claim to have answers to all the questions concerning the move towards a mass and inclusive higher education system, but we do have a story to tell. Some of the ideas in this book will be of relevance to providers across the post-compulsory system. Others are specific to the struggle to find a distinctive, but inclusive role for higher education in post modernity.

The book divides into three parts. The first part provides the book's context. Chapter one introduces the global and localised context for a future higher education system. It discusses recent influences and debates on the nature of higher education and the role of universities. It asks: What kind of higher education is envisioned for the twenty first century and what are the implications for those least involved in its provision so far? From the literature, we draw some conclusions about ways forward for engaging adults most on the margins and introduce the themes for the rest of the book. Chapter two introduces our project - its origins, its locus within our own institution and how we went about combining action with research - making provision and analysing what worked and why. The second part of the book takes three specific aspects of our higher education provision. We expand on some of the themes of chapter one and explain how that provision relates to current thinking about adult learners and higher education. In particular we look at the core skills debate, curriculum and guidance issues. Part three looks more specifically at the learners' experiences in a life history context and in relation to what they want for themselves from a future higher education system. We take some individual stories and follow through what learning in the community has meant for them. We also report on a larger survey of their future goals and ambitions amongst people who took part in our programme. In other words, what, if anything, has been distinctive about university intervention for the learners? This section raises questions about how and where higher education for the many fits into the post compulsory sector and how it relates to a larger lifelong learning agenda. The final chapter offers some thoughts on the implications of new technology initiatives for community based higher education amongst marginalised adult learners.

Chapter one: A Kind of Higher Education

Mass enrolments in further and higher education have spawned highly innovative curricular changes. Courses have been modularised. Access to further and higher education has been widened. Systems of credit accumulation and transfer have been developed. Education institutions themselves have grown in scale and complexity and older subject boundaries have been and are eroding. Stronger links between the worlds of work and education and the interests and needs of students are taken much more seriously than they one were ... There remains none the less, a wide divide between what has been and what might yet be achieved (Williamson, 1998: 53).

Much has been written in the last decade about what our future higher education system might look like. Several themes have precipitated these debates. Amongst the most prominent is the impact of globalisation, manifested by a technologically shrinking world and increased competitiveness. There is an assumption that increased educational participation will contribute to economic advancement - though some question the proven evidence for this (Edwards, 1997). There is also a feeling that people need to be better prepared for a fast moving world of uncertainty and change:

> 'A new kind of society is emerging, which is global in its reach, market driven, socially and culturally fragmented, individualistic in its moral commitments and powered by the technology of an information revolution' (Williamson, 1998: 116).

The argument nowadays is that the one-off specific practical or academic training of the past needs to be supplemented by ongoing updating and the nurturing of skills of adaptability and flexibility. People across all social groups are now required to be better prepared for unpredictable employment patterns. We can no longer afford to train people for one skill only. Old styles of educational exclusion are proving more expensive than inclusion might prove to be. Elitism is out of fashion and universities have a correlated need for more public money. But for the higher education system to secure the public support it needs to survive, it must be seen to be playing a stronger part in the everyday lives of ordinary people. From their remote ivory tower positions, various higher education institutions are now climbing an upward slope towards their own versions of social inclusion. It is time, it is argued, for universities themselves to take the initiative and define what they are about before others do it for them. Williamson claims that one way forward is for universities to develop closer links with regional and local, as well as global communities:

> 'They will reduce their vulnerability to the state if they are seen to have a unique place in the cultural life of society as a whole' (1998: 126).

It is never easy to change, of course - especially if you have already decided that what you do is, quite simply, excellent. So, universities must first convince themselves that there is a need for change. Then they must decide what is 'higher' about their system; and then they must come to terms with a distinctive role for universities in this new system - in a world with increasingly fewer boundaries between levels of provision. Indeed, part of the problem for universities in a mass higher education system lies in the increasingly blurred boundaries for what, precisely higher education stands for if it is no longer the prerogative of the privileged few.

The main argument for change, and the most effective one to engage political interest, is economic. Universities need both public and state funds. They are now subject to market forces and have to sell themselves as worthy of purchase. They must be a prize worth striving for by people across the age span and social strata. So what does the literature say about positioning our higher education system in a lifelong learning context, fit for the many, rather than the few? And what in particular might higher education have to offer our adult population, the majority of whom have absorbed a very traditional concept of higher education - and the majority of whom were not members of its privileged elite? This chapter will briefly explore a number of questions. Firstly, what kind of higher education are we currently critiquing? What are the perceived essential qualities and primary purposes of higher education which should be preserved? Alongside this, what are the anxieties about possible future directions for mass higher education which might threaten those purposes within the current concept of lifelong learning? Finally we shall discuss a number of visions for the future shape of an inclusive higher education for adults. From these visions we shall draw up, in the ensuing chapters, our own understanding of community based higher education provision, the place where most inclusive education starts. Here will be the test for the reality of a new kind of higher education.

The primary purposes of higher education

There is some consensus that university missions generally have been to do with research and scholarship, teaching and learning and contributing to services 'outside' the university (Duke 1992). Nevertheless Duke (1992) points out that universities have generally been more focused on preparing their students for higher education than the wider world. Barnett (1990) even suggests that the universities' principle domains of knowledge (research and scholarship) are in reality only constructions of self interest: 'ideologies serving hidden social interests and fundamental concepts of man and society' (p. 37). In spite of these caveats, Barnett in particular identifies some 'essential conditions' which make higher education 'higher' than other forms of learning. He claims that education:

> 'Only becomes higher when the student is able to form an independent evaluation of

> what he or she has learned... to put it into some kind of perspective... see its strengths but also its limitations' (1990: 165).

In other words, higher learning takes a broad perspective where the university student is encouraged to make independent judgements about knowledge based on informed understanding from several perspectives. To place this experience in the higher domain of learning, Barnett identifies some of the essential conditions which achieve that goal as a 'deep' understanding and 'radical critique' of knowledge claims. These include the ability to conduct some form of independent inquiry and present that critique in open dialogue, alongside critical self reflection (p.203). The essence of learning at this level is the application of a 'critical spirit' and rehearsal of established truths. Whilst it has been argued elsewhere (Preece 1999, 1999a) that established truths and knowledge claims are themselves a barrier to inclusive education, for now we will concentrate on the assumed processes which make learning 'higher'. Other writers, for instance, tend to support the notion that universities have historically been about the creation, testing and transmission of knowledge (McNair 1997a, 1997b) and that graduate skills include the ability to analyse, synthesise, reason critically and think creatively (Knapper and Cropley 1995) though there is still a tendency to see these processes in the context of university defined subject disciplines (Barnett 1997a, 1997b). However, even writers looking specifically for new directions in higher education base their goals on a set of value laden terms such as truth, objectivity and freedom of thought (Coffield and Williamson 1997). Nevertheless they provide a starting point from which to build the new vision.

Most of these visions are written in the wake of recently generalised conceptions of a 'learning age' (DfEE 1998, Dearing 1997) and precipitated by a drive for the now common catch phrase of 'lifelong learning'. Both these terms suffer from a fuzziness of definition, though lifelong learning is beginning to be defined in relation to political and economic goals. At the more liberal end Knapper and Cropley (1995) suggest that lifelong learning is about bridging the gap between education and the outside world, linking education with everyday life needs. Higher education's new role is to 'equip people with lifelong learning skills' (p.45). They define these as the ability to set personal objectives, apply knowledge, evaluate personal learning, skills of information retrieval and interpretation of materials from different subject areas (p.45). Such a goal would surely appeal to a mass higher education system and enable inclusivity.

The fragility of this goal in the context of the above values for higher education are apparent however. On the one hand there is a European driven focus for lifelong learning which is vocationally oriented. This is being adopted by some sectors for instrumental purposes as primarily focused on skills updating programmes. The narrow emphasis on such an instrumentalist form of learning is critiqued, however, by a number of writers. Hake (1997) for instance suggests that the European focus on lifelong learning for predictable economic imperatives - labour mobility, employability and education and training - ignore the very requirements of education for a risk society which the more open, critical thinking aspects of higher education should be concentrating on. Korsgaard (1997) too claims that the labour market imperative has meant that 'other goals have receded' (p.18). They voice anxieties about the potential direction for higher education as a contributor to this form of lifelong learning. Scott (1995) for instance, suggests that a mass higher education system in these domains will become less autonomous. Barnett (1990), too, expresses concern about a potential skills emphasis on instrumentalism and vocationalism rather than his perceived emancipatory elements of higher education. Edwards (1997) challenges the current discourse of lifelong learning which forefronts 'self reliance and economic competitiveness' at the expense of wider societal goals (p.179). He suggests that such a discourse is a strategy for blurring the old boundaries between education and training - a way of marginalising previously acceptable differentials between the two styles of provision. The effect of this is to reconfigure what constitutes today's learning society (p.78). Amongst these concerns is a consensus that the new university requires a different perception of itself and its relationship to the local as well as global world. McPherson (1991) suggests this might mean that higher education becomes a stage, rather than level, of learning in the new lifelong learning mode. Here the emphasis shifts from seeing higher education as a natural progression from the school accreditation and learning system. It will be more focused on a style of provision accompanied by extensive student support services, open admissions policies, flexible programmes, the promotion of underrepresented groups as well as the continued promotion of excellence. The key to the new higher education is to see it as a contributor to lifelong learning, rather than a particular phase in the life cycle. Higher education will be something which is open to all, a learning organisation in itself which relates to and responds to the wider society in which it operates (Longworth 1997).

So how will this new university look? Lifelong learning visions for higher education now oscillate between an emphasis on vocationalism (the European White Paper, 1995 for example) and concerns for the need to maintain a finger on the pulse of social democracy (Williamson 1998, for example). Nevertheless almost all are in agreement that the new university must be seen within a lifelong learning perspective of continuous learning throughout the adult lifespan, which will have to deal with a more heterogeneous student body than previously, alongside a concern by some that universities need a stronger regional role and accountability to the public (Williamson and Coffield, 1997).

A new higher education

The race, therefore, is on to come up with a notion of higher education which is not itself marginalised - one which embraces plurality and goes beyond practical perceptions of labour market needs. So what are the challenges to the new higher education? What aspects of today's society are predicating the need for change? Coffield and Williamson (1997) and Scott (1997) point to the issue of knowledge itself. Where universities were once the main producers of knowledge, defined by their own theoretical boundaries, experiential knowledge is now a competitive commodity, defined and produced by people outside of the university. So Coffield and Williamson point out that higher education is no longer the main producer of knowledge; it no longer produces universal truths (if it ever did) and the public are no longer prepared to tolerate a system of education which makes few links with them. To ensure wider public support higher education institutions need to meet more diverse public needs. Robertson (1997), too claims that universities need to make friends with the public at large in order to remain a leader in the field of higher learning. McNair (1997a) interprets this as universities needing to embrace a wider field of knowledge. Coffield and Williamson suggest that one way forward is to equip a broader range of students with knowledge of how to learn for themselves, rather than transmit knowledge itself. Alongside this Middlehurst (1997) suggests universities need a broader definition of quality. Quality is also about accountability to the wider public. Rather than assessing quality on the basis of entry requirements into specific degree programmes with predefined outcomes, quality should also be about looking at the process of quality enhancement of the learning experience. Barnett (1997a 1997b, 1998) suggests that the old emphasis on discipline based critical thinking skills needs to be broadened to include more attention to critical action, the use of 'the lived experience' and self reflection abilities (1997b: 69). In other words the new student needs 'metabilities' to stimulate change, not just respond to it. The challenge is to enlist higher education: 'to develop human beings capable not just of living in a world of uncertainty, but of contributing actively to it' (Barnett, 1998: 21). It might be said that it is the very complexity of the world today which needs to be translated into the higher learning skills of the new higher education student.

There is no shortage of suggestions about how this broader purpose of higher education might function, ranging from the conceptual to the organisational. Barnett's (1997a) vision is broadly conceptual. He suggests that if higher education's role is to problematise knowledge then the new institution should build an environment which emphasises critical learning, rather than teaching. He even proposes that no topic should be 'off limits' in higher education (1997b: 2), though he later reinterprets those topics within the context of existing disciplines (1997b: 19). Nevertheless he states that we need a new concept of higher education: 'which starts from the understanding that the world is unknowable in any serious sense' (1997a: 43). The new metabilities to be developed will combine the traditional academic domain of critical thinking with a greater exploration of the role of self (reflexivity) in dialogue, and application of practical understanding (praxis) - resulting in 'metacritique' (p.42). He is one of the few writers to attempt a description of how the new learning experience might function. He suggests, for instance that:

> 'Students are challenged through the interpersonal character of their experiences to justify themselves and to come up with creative formulations in both their thinking and their actions' (1997b: 167).

Unlike the more traditional notion of objectivity, where the authoritative text as the medium for analysing knowledge, Barnett goes beyond this. He proposes a synthesis of critique between knowledge, the self and the world: 'Critical being means investing something of yourself' (1997b: 172).

This is a more radical concept than the one produced by the officially commissioned Dearing report (1997) to look at higher education for the twenty first century, but of particular relevance to the engagement of adult learners, as future chapters will show. Dearing essentially followed a practice-based approach responsive to the demands of industry. So Dearing proposed the development of broad intellectual skills rather than subject specialisms at an early stage in the undergraduate programme, and the incorporation of work experience, with flexible, modularised teaching. Such an environment would operate within a national qualifications framework to facilitate portability of qualifications and the opportunity to stop and re-start higher education at various points in the life-cycle. Whilst chapter three will look more specifically at core skills as a learning framework for community education it is worth noting here that Dearing's original, and longer, list of skills included many that have already been cited as essential to the higher education learning experience, such as critical thinking, information appreciation and management, problem identification and solving.

Ironically, in view of Dearing's focus on the professionalisation of university teaching, for the most part writers on behalf of the future university have emphasised its need to concentrate on the development of learning rather than teaching environments (Longworth 1997, Watson and Taylor 1998, McNair 1998, for example).

The latter two publications attempt a more organisational concept of the future university and with particular reference to adult learners. Watson and Taylor (1998) identify some key features which they see as inevitable for the higher education system - ranging from a notion that all universities should still retain a sense that they are the conscience of democratic society, to a recognition that the sector as a whole will continue in the foreseeable future to consist of hierarchical differentiation including diversity of missions and research emphases. The new higher education system is envisaged, nevertheless, to be inclined to a stronger focus on work experience elements in its curriculum, a wider, more interdisciplinary curriculum base, probably devised more collaboratively, and in closer interaction with the wider community, and be part of a credit rated system with flexible teaching which leans more towards facilitation of learning rather than a traditionally top down imposed teaching style. To this Williamson and Coffield (1997) add that universities will need to demonstrate a clearer transparency of purpose and more emphasis on collaboration with outside agencies in devising and accrediting learning, partly as a result of the need for diversified funding of programmes.

McNair (1997a, 1998) more specifically focuses on the student experience - which links back to Barnett's notion of critical being. He suggests that adult learners will bring their own experience and understanding to the traditional curriculum. This will mean a stronger student engagement in knowledge creation, challenging its traditional 'monopoly over the validity of knowledge' (p. 36). The result will be a curriculum which inevitably relates more closely to the outside world and meets many needs, with outcomes which are achievement led, rather than leading to the traditional three year degree programme. He also, more openly than most, suggests that 'higher' education may not necessarily happen solely within the university. It will be a kind of education which is made explicit by its style rather than content or place of learning. Quality will not be defined by initial entry requirements, but on outcomes and achievements of individual students. Taking aside funding issues for the time being, he cites three key features which will underpin the new higher education system. Firstly a skills based core curriculum would consist of analysis, critical thinking, problem solving and communication. Secondly there would also be a strong learner support and guidance system. A learner, rather than subject centred curriculum would require tutoring and guidance as their central function, rather than act as bolt on services. Thirdly a credit framework, which enables maximum flexibility and mobility of students, would be modular and have clearly defined learning goals. These three latter features will be explored in chapters three, four and five in terms of their practicalities for community based learners.

From these proposals it is possible to conceive of some form of generic approach for a new kind of higher education. There will be an emphasis on forefronting the learner experience, combining theory, reflection and practice and a closer dialogue with the outside world, including the public at large. Higher education, if it is to survive, has to become more relevant to the paymasters, but also has to identify and make transparent its distinctive contribution to knowledge creation. What is missing from these visions is a reality perspective of how the macro will translate into the micro. How can higher education enter into a dialogue with its community at its most local level? How does higher education begin to deconstruct its traditional knowledge bases to engage with experiential knowledge? How does a higher learning experience which forefronts guidance rather than knowledge transmission really work? How can 'higher' translate into 'mass', so that it includes the most excluded? How do we develop a lifelong learning curriculum for those who are already outside the labour market? How do we engage with a credit system which focuses on achievement and works with open entry from a disenfranchised adult public? What does a curriculum 'off limits' look like?

The following chapters attempt to put the above theoretical perspectives into a reality context. They describe and analyse community learning which involves underrepresented groups, addresses modularisation, credit accumulation, assessable outcomes, a higher education skills framework and accountability to the region. The above concepts will be explored in more detail in relevant chapters and the learners themselves will be allowed to put such learning into their own life history contexts. The goal of this book is to engage with the practical reality of some of the above notions of a kind of higher education. The final chapter will look at a particular feature of the new learning age which the socially excluded find hard to access - principally the question of information technology. We shall explore some of the issues around the two speed world of those with and those without information technology and look at some possible ways forward for disenfranchised groups, based on our own experience of attempting to address this issue.

But we do not wish to delude ourselves that we are straying too far from the dominant discourses of our time. Whatever our solutions they will necessarily be constrained by language which already defines what counts as synthesis, creativity and knowledge creation. In the words of Edwards:

> 'A discourse of access to provision may well increase and widen participation, but this will be within certain cultural boundaries, signifying specific exercises of power. Indeed part of that power is precisely in constructing questions of participation and non participation as cultural - that participation can be extended through the technical alteration to the delivery of the curriculum alone. This combines technical and practical

> rationality, thereby limiting the challenge to established practices and dominant norms' (Edwards 1997: 115).

Nevertheless we think we have gone further than most in looking at how higher education might meet the needs of those currently least involved in its programmes.

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Report On Work In Two Subregional Centres

Professor Chris Green

Professor Chris Green is Director, Regional Office of Anglia Polytechnic University responsible for partnerships involving 21 FE/HE institutions in the Eastern Region, and also for the work of the Schools Liaison Unit. Since its creation in1991 the Regional Office has become the focus of one of the largest franchise programmes in England covering over 12 disciplines from subdegree to postgraduate awards. A psychologist by profession, he occupies the Chair of Adult and Continuing Education at the University. He was awarded the OBE for his services to community in East Anglia. Currently Professor Green's team has been conducting a number of studies related to the economic regeneration of areas in Essex linked to the perception and expectations of school pupils and students. He is currently Chair of a HEFCE funded project which brings together five Universities in East of England examining issues related to Widening Participation.
Professor Chris Green, Anglia Polytechnic University
Tel: 01245 493131

Abstract

'Report on work in two subregional centres, bringing together the labour market intelligence, the needs of employers and the role of HE'.

The focus of most current research into 'Lifelong Learning' is on graduates, those in vocational education, and adults engaged in Continuing Education. But what of those who have more recently embarked upon the process of lifelong learning and who have yet to make choices about the direction their careers will take? Over the past three years staff at Anglia Polytechnic University have been researching the potential skills mix of young people in Years 10-13; their views about the potential for employment in their home area; and their stated intentions about further study. This research underlines the view that subject choices made at the beginning of the post 14 educational cycle will open or close educational and vocational doors later on. The research has provided an agenda for investigating the views held by local employers and for informing the priorities for action being developed by local authorities as part of economic regeneration. The research also will contribute to the intended HEFCE research which brings together six HEFCE Higher Education Institutions in East Anglia.

Widening Participation And Inter-Generational Education

Tony Jowitt

Tony Jowitt, at the time of writing, is Director of Continuing Education at the University of Bradford. From 1 March 1999 he will be Principal and Chief Executive of Northern College. He previously worked at the University of Leeds. He has written extensively in the fields of local and regional history, with books on employers and labour in the English Textile Industries 1850-1939, Victorian Bradford, The Centennial History of the Independent Labour Party, and Model Industrial Communities in Mid-Nineteenth Century Yorkshire. In addition he has published articles on the history and development of British adult/continuing education and is currently involved, with Cal Weatherald, in putting together a publication on Inter-generational Education.

Abstract

Continuing Education has always been concerned with addressing educational disadvantage and opening up educational opportunities. However, whereas in the past it was overwhelmingly concerned with adult students, a growing trend is for departments to see educational disadvantage as ongoing and inter-generational which necessitates working across the whole of the age range. This paper will look at how one university, located in a city and region which manifests high levels of ongoing educational disadvantage, has addressed the issue of widening participation through inter-generational events in activities such as junior universities, child/parent groups, youth projects and accelerated access programmes.

IN PARTNERSHIP

Inclusive Partnerships For Cultural Diversity And Development

Patricia Whaley and Asma Shaffi

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Asma Shaffi (Thornaby Regeneration Partnership)

Abstract

This paper will describe the evolution over five years (1994 -1999) of a multicultural partnership initiative in an inner-city area of Teeside.

It will focus on:

- The principles
- The partners
- The projects
- The people

which will be used to critically explore:

- issues of resource and funding and the changing and dynamic nature of partnership
- links between learning and community regeneration and between education, development and enterprise
- challenges and opportunities community-based, collaborative and multi-cultural projects present to the academy.

The Principles

To understand these, we need to look at the situation the project was designed to address. The areas known as Victoria and Parkfield are electoral wards in Thornaby and Stockton respectively, towns which themselves are part of Stockton-on Tees Borough Council. In 1994, the council was a very new unitary authority; Cleveland County Council having been abolished by the Conservative Government of the day.

Cleveland County Council had itself replaced Teesside and the geographical area is still known variously as Cleveland or Teesside. For those who are unfamiliar with the area, it is the hinterland of the Tees basin, where the river meets the North Sea. Although Stockton has been a settlement since medieval times (and has a claim to fame as having the widest high street in England with an ancient market) its prosperity and development was shared with its neighbour, Middlesbrough, with the advent of the iron, later steel, industry.

The area experienced a severe decline during the Thatcher years, with high levels of unemployment and social deprivation. In the 1980s and 1990s it became one of the country's poorest regions, with an unemployment rate of just under 11% overall and as high as 26% in some wards. The take-up of HE, participation in post-compulsory education generally and the proportion of graduates in the workforce are among the lowest in England, with half the national average for business start ups. (University of Durham 1997a)

> 'Cleveland, perhaps more than any other industrial area, has experienced the most dramatic consequences of economic recession and industrial restructuring.' (Cole and MacDonald 1990 p.168)

Just as the iron industry in the nineteenth century had brought mass immigration, particularly from Ireland, the booming industries in iron and steel, chemicals and ship-building attracted migrants from the South Asian sub-continent from the 1950s onwards. In the 1990s, in Thornaby and Stockton, they were largely concentrated in two wards, Victoria and Parkfield.

Ethnic Minorities as a percentage of total population
Stockton on Tees: 1.6 (Pakistan 0.7; India 0.34; other 0.6)
Parkfield: 9.8 (Pakistan 7.4; Indian 0.5; other 1.9)
Victoria: 7.8 (Pakistan 5.1; India 1.9; other 0.8)
(Source 1991 Census)

In England in 1991, nearly 6 out of 10 of all ethnic minority people lived in the South East region; Teesside has comparatively few, less than the West Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside and North Wales. However, in some ways this makes their problems more acute - increasing the 'difference'; segregation in tightly defined areas; and strong cultural and familial links (ties), as they originate from the same areas in the South Asian sub-continent. Many of the characteristics of ethnic minorities identified in national reports, for example with regard to household income (82% of Pakistani and 84% of Bangladeshi households had below half the average income, as compared with 28% of white households) (Modood *et al* 1997 Policy Studies Institute) are found in Victoria and Parkfield. Across the country, unemployment rates are higher for ethnic minorities than whites. (Equal Opportunities Ethnic Minorities Key Facts February 1999). The consequences of the industrial decline in Teesside were correspondingly felt by the ethnic minority communities of Victoria and Parkfield. A large proportion of working males are self-employed.

There had been a number of initiatives to address the decline:

> 'Cleveland has become a, if not the, centre for the development and testing of the Thatcher government's strategy of encouraging 'enterprise' (Cole and MacDonald 1990 p. 168)

But the problems of the ethnic minority communities remained. For both men, and particularly, for women, there is a problem with language: in Stockton, 65% and in Thornaby, 60%, of the ethnic minority population is non English speaking adults. As a result, Asian communities were missing out on a whole range of opportunities that had been established for disadvantaged individuals and groups, with regard to education and training; health and housing; jobs and job skills. Cultural and language barriers had not been addressed in any strategic way.

To address these problems, a partnership, the Victoria and Parkfield Project, was launched in 1994, specifically for the communities of the two wards. Its aim was to assist the ethnic minority community to access:

- advice and information services;
- education, training and employment opportunities;

The issue of advice and guidance has been noted in every major report and document concerning adult and continuing education in the last decade. Yet, as Jonathan Brown, Professor of Educational Guidance at the Open University, points out, it is still to receive the necessary attention and resource (Adults Learning 1999). In the case of this initiative, the first priority was to establish an appropriate and accessible advice and information service, alongside the gradual development of projects and courses.

In 1997, the Victoria and Parkfield Initiative became an integral part of the Thornaby Regeneration Partnership, a larger Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funded project. It changed its name to CREATE (Creating Equality of Access to Training, Employment and Education), with a broader aim to offer equality of access to opportunities in education, training and employment to *all* community groups, including ethnic minorities. The significance of this change from dedicated provision to integration / incorporation (assimilation?) will be addressed later in this paper. The social and economic profile, produced for the Partnership Board by the University, revealed low levels of educational attainment and participation across the whole community and 53% 'not in work'. A Skills Shortage Survey carried out at the same time identified both the skill levels among local communities and the needs of local employers. This information set base-lines and informed the planning of the Initiative.

The Partners

The major partners in the Victoria and Parkfield initiative were:

- The Workers Educational Association (WEA);
- Stockton International Family Centre;
- Cleveland County Council;
- The Five Lamps Centre in Thornaby;

The WEA was the lead partner and employer of the project workers, playing a significant role in the development, from initial outline to thriving schemes and successful exit strategy.

Funding came from a variety of sources. In addition to the above partners, contributions came from:

- The Baring Foundation;
- The European Social Fund;
- Stockton City Challenge;
- Stockton and Thornaby Task Force;
- Teesside TEC;

And the University of Durham - a minor sum compared to those above, but arguably crucial in certain ways, certainly in our view, for the university.

The university's involvement grew out of a longstanding partnership, nearly century-long, with the WEA, through the then extra-mural and subsequently Department of Adult and Continuing Education (DACE).

A number of changes occurred which caused the old relationship to be re-worked; some of these were part of the changing national agenda; some to do with an extra dimension to the university's mission and others because of the particular nature of the local, evolving WEA.

The HEFCE funding change in 1994 altered the long-standing practice of collaborative liberal adult and community education provision, through which the University of Durham had committed resources to activities on Teesside for some years.

University College Stockton, now University of Durham Stockton Campus (UDSC), was established in 1992, on the site of Prime Minister Thatcher's famous walkabout among the desolation and dereliction of defunct industry. At first a joint initiative with the University of Teesside and subsequently wholly part of the University of Durham, this added a specific dimension to Durham's mission: 'To pursue a partnership approach to provide mutual support and promote the regeneration of the region'. (University of Durham 1997b)

The role of Director for Community Education within DACE (held by Pat) embraced both responsibilities for the new accredited undergraduate courses and for developing learning opportunities for people in a variety of communities in North East England, partly through the specially funded Widening Provision (WP) Project.

The WEA in Teesside embarked on a new, strategic developmental phase, concentrating its activities in a more radical and focused programme to address inequality and disadvantage. It became the lead body in a number of successful funding bids and creative partnerships.
The University's relationship with the Victoria and Parkfield project was in some senses a peripheral one. It was not a major partner in terms of funding or policy. It did, however, through Pat's role, provide consultancy and, as part of the WP project, some development and courses. This allowed the vital link between university and community to be maintained, as well as

offering the University an opportunity for new partnerships, which would prove to be crucial in the new Learning Age of the Labour Government. Thus, the University, through UDSC, is a member of the Thornaby SRB partnership and a university representative sits on the Board. Its financial contribution is largely 'in kind': staff time and involvement.

The SRB project highlights the way partnerships operate and change; with new sets of relationships and responsibilities, embracing a number of sectors. The composition of the partnership reflects the local cross-sectoral (vested) interest in education, training, employment and regeneration. (see Appendix). This is precisely the kind of partnership to which the Government looks to provide the links between learning and economic and social development. This presents a challenge for the university and for academia in general.

> '...academic institutions imagine that everyone views education as a Good Thing, often adopting the missionary position in taking the canon to the ignorant and unenlightened of the world (all puns intended)' (Whaley 1998)

In laying out the Lifelong Learning agenda, the current Government has made it quite clear that it expects HEIs to collaborate with other providers and players and that roles and relationships will have to be re-worked. The significance of the community and voluntary sector in policy and funding highlights the folly of universities assuming the missionary position in the future.

The Projects

The University's WP project as part of the Victoria and Parkfield Initiative included specific initiatives for the ethnic minority communities:

- Introduction to setting up a Community Business (April 1996);
- 20 students (19 women); cohort had already successfully completed an OCN accredited course 'Community Translator'. It was the students' hope that they could set up and establish a community business as community translators, and were seeking help in acquiring the skills and confidence;
- Teesside Sangum: Elder Asian Writing of Community History (July 1996);
- 12 students (11 men); programme aimed at retrieving the histories of members of the elder Asian community and to involve them actively in the writing of these life histories;
- Community Interpreter (1996): 10 students (all women); 10 week OCN accredited course addressing the issues and skills required by many members of the Asian community for translation facilities when dealing with police, social workers, DSS, NHS etc;
- ATACE: Access to Teaching Adults in Adult and Community Education (June 1996): 25 students (21 women);

The Community Interpreting course had created a cohort of students, who proceeded with their plans to establish a community business, via a co-operative network. In December 1996 Stockton Interpreters was launched as a community business, with funding from the WEA, Stockton Borough Council and the Thornaby Regeneration Budget. The Community Interpreting Programme won the national New Learning Opportunities European Social Fund Award in 1998

Thornaby Regeneration Partnership

The CREATE project planned to build on the work of the Victoria and Parkfield Initiative by developing educational opportunities, vocational skills training, pre-recruitment training with local employers and self-employment support, as well as expanding the community interpreting business, renamed 'Everyday Language Solutions'.

With the intention of CREATE 'To establish a targeted, unified approach to the disadvantaged and ethnic minority communities' (SRB document), there was a fundamental change in strategy and approach. The needs of ethnic minorities were included in the objectives of the 7 year plan for the whole community. The intention was to overcome stereotyping, to consolidate and embed (mainstream), to encourage awareness of, and between, different ethnic communities, to provide cross and multicultural development and to prepare people from all ethnic backgrounds for participation in FE and HE provision.

This accords with the views of Paul Boateng, the current Home Office Minister for the voluntary sector that the ethnic minorities need to be more involved with the mainstream voluntary sector in partnership, consultation and decision-making:

> 'I expect the mainstream to be about the business of fully involving the black and ethnic minority sector...I'm absolutely determined to ensure the black and ethnic minority voluntary sector is not ghettoised - even a successful ghetto is not an acceptable one.' (Third Sector, 1999 p. 1)

In the SRB programme, the specific needs and problems of the ethnic minority communities were recognised and addressed in a number of ways:

- The employment of bi-lingual full and part time staff - development workers, tutors, administrators;
- Policy issues around ethnic minorities were explicitly included in project planning and development;
- Specific delivery - courses for ethnic minority groups e.g. interpreters, community business, family learning, Asian dressmaking;
- 85% of Everyday Language Solutions work is still with minorities;

The potential benefits of the integrated approach include:

- Raising the profile and confidence of the ethnic minority communities (which include more than one ethnic group) within the whole community;
- Encouraging the majority/white community to work outside its own group;
- Embedding provision;
- More resource;

At the same time, there may well be disadvantages in integration, not least for those for whom the majority system at best presents barriers of language, culture and ignorance and, at worst, institutionalised racism.

The People

The people for whom this initiative was set up largely came to Teesside in the 1950s to work as general labourers in the steel industry. The majority came from Kashmir, the Mirpur district, in North Pakistan. In the 1990s, the largest proportion of working males are self-employed (e.g. retail trade, taxi-driving). Only a minority of the adult community speaks English. The determined preservation of cultural values and traditions, as a distinct minority within a prevailing majority, has to some extent led to communities 'frozen in time'. There were problems of resistance to initiatives for change; trust needed to be established; different ways of reaching men and women had to be explored.

The project did successfully reach out as the outputs show: 2,000 learning opportunities; 300 accredited programmes; 100 annual advice sessions; and 45 part time and full time jobs created, some of which were taken up by members of the ethnic minority communities. The Community Interpreting Project, established by Asma (who is the Lifelong Learning manager for the SRB Partnership) led to the development of the successful community business - Everyday language Solutions - set up in response to the local shortage of trained interpreters to work in the health and social services fields. It now offers a translation service in 26 languages to individuals and groups, and to statutory, community and commercial organisations. Among the 60 interpreters and project staff are many of the students who completed the Open College Network accredited programme in community interpreting.

The sole man on the original course funded by the University in the Victoria and Parkfield Project, Gulbag Singh, has just enrolled on an undergraduate programme at UDSC.

Kubra Aziz, who lives in Parkfield and successfully completed the ATACF course, took up a post as an adult tutor and won a national Adult Learners award in 1996.

The Issues

These can be considered in several ways. Firstly, there are a number of problems that the partnership - The Victoria and Parkfield Project and then the SRB Partnership - had to face. Then there were the challenges such collaborative activity presented to the University. Finally, the evolution of this initiative illustrates many of the issues facing the academic and other communities in meeting the Government's agenda for Lifelong Learning, social inclusion and economic regeneration.

Problems For / From the Partnership

- The task of convincing the Local Authority of the necessity for specialist provision, given the relatively low percentage of ethnic minorities in the borough;
- The finite nature of much of the funding (e.g. Task Force), which required an effective exit strategy very early in the Victoria and Parkfield project's life;
- The difficulty of relating outcomes that required quantification, to essentially capacity building work and 'social' activities;
- The need to gain the confidence and trust of community leaders and religious leaders, and cope with religious issues, inter-cultural problems, areas of sensitivity and tension;
- The implications of the change from the Victoria and Parkfield Project (specialist, dedicated) to SRB Partnership (integrated);
- The difficulties in sustaining an effective and genuine partnership, with all the issues of power, control, autonomy and self-interest that partnerships carry;
- Fulfilling the requirements of different funders and meeting the expectations of the various partners;
- Reaching out to individuals and groups, overcoming barriers and resistance of various kinds.

Challenges For / From the University

- The need for the then Department of Adult and Continuing Education to make a case for University commitment in the face of changed funding for 'outreach' work. There would be no immediate return for any investment in this area, beyond the financial inducement of the WP programme;
- The importance of re-working old partnerships and relationships, to forge new, effective strategic alliances and collaborative ventures;
- The translation of the University's mission to its regional communities into approaches and activities which it could endorse and deliver;
- The significant cultural change required by and within the university, in order to introduce and embed, the inclusive agenda of lifelong learning and widened participation;
- The changing nature of partnership and the discomfort of subsidiary roles;
- The implications of developmental work like this - very person-intensive and long-term - for resource and research;
- The crucial factors of quality assurance and research assessment.

Significant Issues

The challenges represent serious issues for the University of Durham and for other HEIs, especially the pre 1992 universities. In some ways the erstwhile extra-mural / adult and continuing education departments provided an 'easy' way for the Academy to fulfil its mission to 'the people'.

> 'CE, in the traditional university system, operated both as an external agency and as a deviant sub-culture, whereby the universities were able, at little cost and without interference with their mainstream activities, to maintain educational contact with their local population and with local organisations.'(Watson and Taylor 1998 p.116)

Success in recruiting conventional (young, well-qualified) students gave little incentive or impetus for commitment to initiatives for non-traditional students or activities. Checkpoints and barriers are still in place. The university has to decide whether to accept the challenges presented by the new Learning Age and the changing nature of partnerships, and the implications for its culture and structures.

For its part, although real problems remain, the Community has made significant progress in acknowledging the value and relevance of further and higher education and in attempting to cross the divide between it and the Academy. There are still barriers within the ethnic minority communities, with a lack of cohesion. There had to be equal distribution of resources to avoid any conflict between the various racial and religious groups. It has proved particularly difficult to involve women equally and fairly in activities. Nationally, Asian women are under-represented in HE.

The question of special provision as against integration into the generic, has pre-occupied policy-makers and practitioners for decades, in respect of ability/disability, class, gender, religion, sexuality as well as ethnicity. In the case of this initiative, reluctance and hesitation to participate, on the part of the white majority and the black ethnic minority, had to be overcome. Each clearly perceived a danger that its own disadvantage would be overlooked. Community facilitators served as role models and established partner organisations gradually won the trust of individuals and groups. It will be interesting for us to pursue this issue with the providers, practitioners and beneficiaries of the project. It has implications for project staff, as a comment to Asma tellingly reveals: 'You are less employable if you have only worked with ethnic minorities.'

We hope that future research will also offer further insight into the nature of partnership; the perceived and actual roles and relationships, and the basis of the commitment of the various players.

The notion of inclusive partnerships for cultural diversity and development is about the attempt to affect change in society, to the benefit of the whole community, whilst respecting and preserving cultural difference. It is also about the recognition and acceptance of the respective cultures of a variety of providers, and a willingness to engage with each other in an equitable collaboration that thrives on the diversity of the respective contributions.

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Appendix

SRB Partnership Board (approved December 1996)
Five Lamps Organisation
WEA
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Thornaby Town Council
Teesside TEC
Teesside Tomorrow
Everyday Language Solutions
Stockton and Billingham College of FE
Unity Trust Bank
Cleveland Constabulary
University of Durham
Bassleton Secondary School
Thornaby Family Centre
South Thornaby Community Centre
Thornaby Credit Union
Churches Together in Thornaby

Aim:

To regenerate the Thornaby area over seven years by raising the level of economic performance, educational attainment and active involvement of the people of Thornaby, towards creating a thriving and sustainable community.

Creating Partnerships For Pathways: How Do We Ensure Inclusive Partnership Between FE And HE?

Lydia Merryl

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Abstract

Universities are developing mechanisms for widening participation by engaging more directly with 'Feeder Colleges.' However, an inspection of the small detail of relationships between the staff of HEI's and of further Education Colleges reveals complexity and tension, contested boundaries and ontological confusion. This workshop seeks to explore the process of effective partnership building and how it can bring about a creative mutuality on behalf of 'non-standard' students who want a clear progression pathway. We will look at the interface between university expectations of demonstrable academic achievement and 'competence-based learning'. The discourse frontiers between levels three and four will be explored and the role of the 'Honesty Knowledge Broker' will be defined. Participants will be asked to begin to develop a protocol for parity of esteem for the learning achieved in both forms of learning. I will do a draft paper before the workshop, setting out the framework for discussion and action. Participants will be asked to works in pairs to share some of the organisational and conceptual blocks they have discovered which prevent effective partnership between FE and HE course links. The group will develop a larger picture of the contested boundaries and the existing tensions. Responsibility for enabling students to navigate smooth pathways lies with individual tutors, not simply with the prescription of a Qualifications Framework. We will map out some of the existing prejudices and then work in small groups to begin to define the role and responsibility of the negotiator who creates the linkage for the learning processes rather than the assessment output. The thinking of the workshop will be recorded by a note taker and the draft paper amended, circulated to participants for comment and published.

Introduction

Higher Education is being encouraged by the DfEE to form partnerships with local Further Education colleges and other formal and informal providers of learning to the 16+ age group to increase and enhance progression and widen participation. This sounds sensible. It sounds easy. It indicates a situation of trust and mutuality on behalf of our students. But how many of us are engaged in the free flow of learners between institutions? How many of us, on the contrary, spend time exploring the competition for our courses and seeking to ensure the greater market share? When we are asked to make a 'Partnership Bid' for regional funding, how many of us seek to ensure that the lion's share of the new money comes to *us!* The Lifelong Learning Partnership Remit document (Jan 1999) says, 'There is no set prescription for the nature of Learning Partnerships - the only requirement is that certain 'Core' local partners will need to be involved to enable Learning Partnerships to function effectively.' If we are to establish genuine partnerships on behalf of learners who cross sectoral boundaries, what will the ground rules look like. This paper seeks to clarify some of the organisational context and to suggest a set of working Protocols with which we may proceed.

Partnership may be one of the easiest things to prescribe, but it may be one of the most difficult to achieve. In this paper I hope to outline some of the more problematic organisational and conceptual blocks to partnership. Once named, we might begin to work out how to break down the barriers and consider the best interests of learners and their employers, in order to provide a seamless web of learning opportunities.

A Learning Partnership seems to be a new organisational form. Something different in kind from the federal forms described by Mintzberg or Handy (Mintzberg, 1979; Handy, 1988). It assumes a shared mission and shared meanings about what is required for the progression and learning achievement of learners. So, how do we create mutual understanding on behalf of our students? How do we ensure that they can navigate appropriate pathways through the maze of qualifications offered by the myriad of private, voluntary and statutory providers of courses, learning programmes, levels and qualifications? An analysis of the organisations involved in post-16 learning provision reveals contested boundaries, supply side discontinuity and competition, confusion about credit frameworks and equivalence, demand side confusion and duplication of effort on all sides! Above all, it highlights the blight of competition.

Let us be honest and reveal some of the difficulties experienced by our customers; the employers who want to upgrade their workforce and the learners who wish to progress through post-school education and training, gaining credit as they go and reaching recognised goals which employers will respect. They are increasingly likely to want to study part-time. Let us explore some of the barriers we have placed between us in the worlds guarded by 'Gatekeepers', maintainers of academic standards and quality control. Let us consider the role of negotiators and 'Knowledge Brokers' who wish to develop accessible maps of provision where the barriers can come down and Lifelong Learning can become a reality and Higher Education can make a contribution to the ambitious targets set by the government (DfEE, 1998 and 1999).

At the outset we have to admit that our initial model of Higher Education provision conforms to an unspoken paradigm with the Course and its Admissions Tutor at its centre. Drawn in towards this goal are the school teachers and career advisers, the FE 'Feeder Course' tutors, Adult Education, WEA and work-based trainers who should be targeted with flyers about OUR courses. Then there are the free-standing 'Non-standard Applicants' who want to get in and apply if they can find out where to get and how to fill in a UCAS form. We have been judging their capacity to get in.

The Widening Participation debate has forced us to re-consider. We now find the Learner and the Employer at the heart of the new model. It is their needs which have to come first and we, the suppliers of learning services, have to consider linked demand, explore processes of and frameworks for collaboration. We are required to become increasingly flexible and accessible. The new learner has been given a new vision of what they can expect from us and that includes:

- Clearly mapped pathways from one level of training to another;
- Accessible underpinning knowledge which can support them in analysing, understanding and making sense of the changing world;
- Advice and information which is shared between providers and is integral to the learning system, as 'Personal Development Guidance', not just tacked on as a one off Careers session at the end of a course;
- Key skills which help learners to plan, seek employment with further training and maintain their career readiness if they move into a 'portfolio' career of short-term contracts. This is one of the Dearing recommendations;
- Credits which they can attain for learning effort and demonstrated achievement in a variety of settings and not just 'At College.' Credits which can be added up and presented to the next learning provider, who will respect them and consider how they might reduce the time spent on a new programme;
- Flexibility of programmes which will allow learners to use the newly piloted Individual Learning Accounts where and when they want to;
- Access to a variety of institutions of learning which are operating in partnership on their behalf.

We have a new set of customers who expect responsive services. They are employers and employees as well as 'students.' The government's agenda is to create a Learning Society with the objective of, 'Developing in everyone a commitment to Lifelong Learning, so as to enhance their lives, improve their employability in a changing labour market and create the skills that our economy and employers need' (DfEE Objective 2, 1998).

As Higher Education providers, we are in the middle of a massive organisational change, which depends on our understanding of how to make these partnerships *work*. Some writers on organisational power and partnership building (Williamson, 1983; Sakis and Webster, 1995; Pfeffer, 1993) indicate that organisations (and indeed, individuals) will only make agreements to work effectively together if they can see what is in it for them. So, for Further Education, a Partnership may indicate a new market of choices for their students, a stepping stone of achievement, a recognised HE outcome which can be advertised on their FE college course publicity.

> 'Negotiations are taking place with a wide range of HE institutions to use assessment in the workplace as Accredited Prior Experiential Learning towards a DipSW qualification ...The qualification may also give credit towards related professional awards and degrees in areas such as social work, health care, social science and humanities' (BTEC Higher National Certificate in Social Care/Care Management (+ Level 4 NVQ units) Salford College flyer, 1998).

For Higher Education Institutions, the partnerships can ensure a reliable flow of 'Good applicants', where the work of accrediting the prior experiential learning has already been done (and paid for) by the FE assessor. It can support their mission to widen participation to under-represented groups and demonstrate to funders their commitment to lifelong learning through a network of learning centres, in association with FE, in geographical areas where post code analysis shows low take up of HE courses. But this is hard to achieve, hard to change the notion of the Admission Tutor as sovereign, their decision final, their work focus - the central campus of their own institution.

For employers and Unions, now central stakeholders, the essence is responsiveness of courses and learning programmes when and where they are needed. The Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) have been charged to ensure collaboration at regional level by, ‘ Raising regional skills, encouraging links between business and further and higher education...’, as part of their brief to develop, ‘Strong regional partnerships.’ (DTI 1998.42) Careers Companies are also keen to form part of the network who can facilitate links between customers and suppliers of learning services. Contracting a partnership implies a mutuality of interest, a sharing of power, a negotiated process. Contracting through coercion, where one side is vastly more powerful than the other, is doomed to failure. Such arrangements will be dogged by suspicion and hidden agendas, bureau-shaping behaviours will prevail (Williamson in Meryll, 1996) So we have to look at the real power of each player in this process. We have to identify where in the organisation the actual negotiation takes place. For example, if a learner claims credit for previous learning achievement, who negotiates equivalence? Who determines the terms of reference? Who mediates the contested claims for knowledge? When we have a clear picture of the arena and the players, we may be able to work out the rules for the game, the protocols for effective partnership.

In my own organisation, we have been encouraged to let a thousand flowers bloom and to initiate compacts with specific FE course providers at the level of the course or Department. There are numerous examples across the University of academic arrangements, agreements, franchises. The Academic Division oversees the discourse of each transaction separately, mindful of quality assurance. We strive for a common understanding of what constitutes level 3 and what is level 4. In some cases the HE tutor has already established a trusting relationship with an FE course tutor through acting as an Open College moderator and has a fair idea of what the levels actually mean. But certainly not all HE tutors have this understanding. Decisions about the content of the courses lie with the provider tutors. This may lead to doubt about levels, ‘appropriate’ knowledge and ‘acceptable’ value bases, if a credit agreement is sought. This leads to the issue of *who* mediates any claims for privileged knowledge?

Who owns the ultimate power over the skills and competence agenda? Is it the FE tutor with their EDEXCEL checklist or the HE Admissions tutor with their formal criteria for levels of analysis? When we disagree, who can arbitrate? If it is the Academic Division and the Academic Director of my university, away from the site of immediate negotiation, then what happens to my credibility if I have agreed equivalence and they do not allow it? What do I do if my HE course is seen to be deficient by the FE colleague, or the prospective employer, because it does not include credit for Key Skills? *Where does the power to define the partnership actually lie?*

Effective partnership seems to lie in confidence, trust and respect, a mutuality which must be worked for and won. (Kakabadse et al., 1988; Handy, 1988.)But is it a necessity or an honour, which FE partners must strive to achieve? The arrogance which underlies such a suggestion is born out in the attitudes and behaviours of many an Admissions Tutor. It is reflected in the deferential behaviour of many tutors from FE, seeking arrangements for their level 4 GNVQ qualifications to be recognised by a particular Department. How many of us in HE have seen colleagues from FE behave like second class citizens when they come from their building into ours, and see the furniture, the gloss on the leaflets? Do they recall the power of their university tutor's judgement on them when they marked their work? Do they still see us as having the power to 'fail' them? How can we overcome these psychological barriers and begin to reconsider our mutuality of interest in the careers of the learners who will cross frontiers, move through levels, achieve and succeed and may call *all* of their formal learning experience, 'Going to College'!

Do we need to come clean with each other in HE and agree that there is a tension between Widening Participation and maintaining standards? Do we need to accept that with the demise of grant aid to students, we are in the business of maintaining recruitment, that we may be facing a crisis of recruitment from our traditional mature students? Do we need to recognise that our future may well lie in the hands of those FE tutors who are developing the confidence as well as the knowledge and skills of learners, who may or may not choose to use our services next? This may well throw a new light onto partnership building. It may call for a dedicated strategy to engage in a much more open and proactive way with providers at different parts of the learning chain. (Let us stop calling it a ladder!) We need to articulate the pathways and choices from which learners may choose. We need to investigate the knowledge and skills needs of employers locally. We need to scrutinise the Labour Market Information and Skills Gaps information being developed by our TEC or Chamber of Commerce. We need to liaise carefully with hard-pressed Careers Company staff, signposting together the routes which learners can take. We need to adapt.

Let us consider the conceptual environment of our new partnerships. There are boundaries. We must accept that the discourse of education and training is riven with different ontological claims. We are asked by the Department of Education and Employment (a new and significant configuration in itself!) to reconsider the meaning of A levels, to accept two-stage AS levels, broader competence-based evidence of learning. We have just begun to understand the meaning of a kitemarked Access programme and are struggling to understand what is meant by a 'GNVQ with merit.' We are asked to consider the claim that an HND is equivalent to HE level 2. We are beset by NTOs and national standards. Who is in the position to broker the equivalencies? Would a national Qualification Framework have sovereignty over the decisions taken by individual Admissions staff? Not yet. We might ask whether it should. At any rate it is contested ground and the QAA stands guard, for it might be said that we are in danger of 'Degrading the Degree.' Will a degree from one compact-friendly University be worth less than a degree offered by a University down the road which only takes A-grade A levels? Will the league tables again measure the value added and the movement of learners who have come from low achievement bases at school, using their life experience and small affordable units of learning to gain a foothold in a university? This might be outside the remit of this paper, but the power of financing change is based on these changing concepts. They are part of the shifting environment in which our organisations are building partnerships.

To be an effective partner, we in HE must respect each other's work and acknowledge that it is about producing verifiable claims for knowledge and skills. It is the role of brokering of learning claims which I think is of such importance. Who decides what it is which should be *known* in any one knowledge domain? Can we refer to the National Standards in all fields of knowledge? No, because these are essentially vocationally defined. So who has the right to select 'subject relevant knowledge', or appropriate skills? Is it the FE tutor or the HE tutor? Do we have the right to insist that one set of values or knowledge must be evidenced before a learner will be admitted from our partner institution? Will we continue to police entry? Do FE tutors, who use EDEXCEL programmes, understand more about skills development and measuring outcomes. Should we all enrol on D32 and D33 courses to recognise a competence and measure its level?

FE tutors I have worked with recently had used the BTEC Higher National Diploma Common Skills proforma for the following competencies for which they encouraged their learners to give evidence:

> 'Treat others' values, beliefs and opinions with respect; Relate to and interact effectively with individuals and groups; Communicate in writing; Participate in oral and non-verbal communication; Identify and solve routine and non-routine problems.' (BTEC Higher National Diploma in Caring Services - Social Care MM12/HIGH1).

Do our HE Key Skills assessment processes yet reflect this degree of interrogation of a whole person's performance or are we assessing their capacity to frame ideas only, in essay or exam format? Are we using portfolios, tasks, presentations? But more significantly, how are we comparing the knowledges which may be demonstrated in such different forms? How can we measure academic achievement against competence-based learning? EDEXCEL/BTEC use not one but three measurements:

- Achievement (academic) by grading criteria;
- Common Skills by profile document;
- Development issues, where learners are required to identify ACTION for further learning.

HE clearly has a great deal to learn from our FE and AE partners. It is no longer optional. Employers are taking young people straight from school with their IT skills (*TES* 26.3.99) and training them up in-house without waiting for them to go through a degree course. Will they later use their paid educational leave to engage with units of learning in HE, or will they go to a more accessible FE institution for marketable qualifications to improve their career? HE is no longer in the driving seat. We have to go with some humility to the negotiating table. We have to work out together the protocols for negotiating the terms of equivalencing and credit transfer. We can no longer assume superiority. We will not necessarily be the dominant partner in the new arrangements. We will learn to accommodate.

At the recent UAce National conference in Cambridge, workshop members discussed these organisational issues and began to consider the development of a set of Protocols which could be invoked in order to make the most effective use of formal Partnership agreements between learning providers and other stakeholders on behalf of our learners. They are as follows:

- Stakeholder interests and separate objectives must be transparent. We must give attention to and not deny each other's agenda;
- Areas of tension, contradiction or competition must be anticipated together and plans put in place to deal with them when they arise;
- A common language and shared meanings for core concepts in the learning must be agreed between all partners;
- Criteria for success of the joint project must be discussed and agreed, at appropriate levels in the organisations, including those of the staff involved at the front lines;
- Timetabling of learning provision in all partner institutions must demonstrate accessibility and parity of esteem for learners who choose to study part time;
- Measurable outcomes must be agreed between staff involved as performance indicators or proxy indicators;
- Responsibility for negotiation must be clarified so that understanding of the partnership is owned at all levels in each of the participating partner institutions;
- Neutral knowledge arbitrators must be identified, perhaps from the local Open College Federation, who can adjudicate on levels of achievement;
- Regional skills gaps information needs to be sought and incorporated whenever a learning programme is revised for accreditation;
- Progression pathways must be mapped and revised regularly as chains of linked learning which do not necessarily entail movement 'up' to HE courses, but could follow a zig-zag pathway of learning appropriate to life and work interests;
- The location of learning should be reviewed and put into accessible learning centres which could house joint provision.

In this paper I have endeavoured to spell out some of the organisational parameters within which effective learning partnerships are being forged. It seems that in an inclusive society we need to understand better the blocks to working together and then to work out, together, ways of achieving *greater parity of esteem for the learning achieved* in different learning environments of which Higher Education is just one amongst many. I have made a suggestion about the protocols needed for negotiation between us, so that we might begin to enable inclusive mutual partnerships between FE and HEIs on behalf of our learners.

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IN POLITICS

Lifelong Learning: Practitioners' Engagement with Change

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the borders between the growing importance of lifelong learning policies and the issues that arise for practitioners already engaging with change. The growing emphasis on an educational sector adept enough to respond to the lifelong learning needs of all individuals, permeates issues of inclusion and equity within Higher Education. Whilst a definitive understanding of lifelong learning is perhaps debatable, a commitment to the politics of equality has underpinned, and continues to underpin the work of practitioners to widen higher education provision. The role of action research will be discussed as a possible tool for practitioners developing and implementing equity and inclusion agendas within a local and national policy context of lifelong learning in the UK.

Introduction

In this paper I will present arguments for the possible uses that action research may have for practitioners working to widen access into higher education. I will draw on my experiences of researching access issues within higher education to highlight how the central aspects of action research may provide ways for research and inclusion work to inter-relate. Such an inter-relation may become possible through practices that create the 'spaces' conducive for critical reflection: especially about the ways in which shifts towards lifelong learning are beginning to figure in equity and inclusion work.

Lifelong learning: a context for inclusion and equity?

There are many reasons to celebrate the growing emphasis of inclusion in Government thinking and HE policy. Furthermore discourses of lifelong learning have many ambiguous slogans and contain concepts with multiple meanings and conflicting rationales. Jenkins (1997) claims that discourses of lifelong learning especially within policy, allow local and sectorial differences to be masked. If discourses are ambiguous enough to mask differences, then lifelong learning policies may play a significant role in bringing about change.

Conversely, discourse of equity and inclusion may also play a part in the ways in which lifelong learning figure in national and local policies. Moreover, lifelong learning may draw from the same political discourses historically found within the field of Continuing Education and the Access Movement, i.e., discourses of equity and inclusion (see for example, Williams, 1997). However, a shift in focus from adult education to adults learning permits the possibility for a notion of lifelong learning that encompasses a much wider focus than that offered within formal institutionalised provision.

For example Edwards *et al.* claims that...

> 'With the shift towards notions of lifelong learning, the emphasis moves from provision to learners and learning, and from inputs to outputs, a process associated with increased commodification of learning and consumer relations.' (1998, p. 14)

McNair (1996) points out how this particular focus of lifelong learning involves a significant shift in emphasis towards learners and therefore individual learning. Such an emphasis tends not to highlight the structural inequalities historically evident and culturally inherent in formal education systems within the UK. Edwards and Usher (1997) add, for example, that lifelong learning is reconstructed as part of a lifestyle and consumer culture. The notion of learning as part of a lifestyle and consumer culture may re-construct learning so as to equate access issues with notions of individual responsibility. For example, I have observed how practitioners working to open up access for the local communities neighbouring their university, find they share their aims with institutional (recruitment) directives to increase student numbers. Although the overall commitment to increase the numbers of students entering HE is shared, the political motives guiding practitioners within the field of access and equity are not.

There are of course many positive aspects when institutional, policy and the aims of activists overlap (even if temporarily). However, caution should be taken if issues of access and equity become perceived and re-defined too far in favour of institutional directives and market-led principles. One effect of defining access and equity issues in terms of consumer relations between institutions and their customers (actual and potential), may be the de-politicisation of some aspects of practice. Moreover, the ways in which practitioners are located within the institutionally derived power structures, may subvert intentions to address lifelong learning as defined and experienced by groups who are deemed to make up the 'excluded'.

The point I would like to highlight is that practitioners in the field of inclusion and equity work *within* and through these very complexities that lifelong learning policies and agendas may encourage. Such practitioners are ideally situated to work across boundaries of both institutions (i.e. HE and FE and compulsory schooling) and with and within different groups and community organisations. The work of access and equity practitioners may therefore be framed by the similar, as well as different, multiple and competing discourses and agendas that are evident within formal and informal places of learning. However, it is the practitioners who move across and within such boundaries that are ideally located to provide understandings of different and multiple 'local' forms of knowledge (i.e. as grounded within universities, colleges, organisations, schools community groups, etc.)

One problem underpinning lifelong learning literature, policy and research

Lifelong learning is a slippery discourse. In other words there are ambiguous and multiple understandings of lifelong learning. Discourses of lifelong learning are grounded within the aims and agendas of a vast array of institutions, bodies and organisations with an investment in the field of education. Therefore, like the concept of community itself, understandings of lifelong learning appear to be many things to many people. Within the realms of higher education, power structures do shape and define the role of access and equity practitioners. Organisationally, knowledge and power are also influencing the ways in which the university will change to combat inequality. Such power structures between institutions, practitioners and excluded or under-represented groups all appear to have a significant role in the way lifelong learning are understood and created.

In my role as a researcher (with little prior experience of higher education and lifelong learning) I have been struck by the ways in which discourses of lifelong learning are becoming common place within texts and practices concerning inclusion and equity issues. Yet conversely the idea of integrating research into the practices of the professionals who work within the lifelong learning field is not yet widely developed.

Research within the field of inclusion and equity work

At my present level of experience of research work in lifelong learning, I am aware of the ways in which research agendas have been organised around four main (but not exclusive) areas.

8. 1. widening provision (before the university experience)
9. 2. transition (on entering the education)
10. 3. learning experience (whilst in education)
11. 4. next destination (on leaving the university)

These areas overlap and share the institution's agenda to monitor and measure recruitment, completion and withdrawal rates, and to quantify quality.

In my experience research about issues of inclusion and equity emphasise the 'student experience'. This area of work is not, however, grounded in the work and practice of inclusion and equity practitioners. In this scenario the possibilities of research become an exercise in institutionally prescribed efforts to measure and accumulate information that may serve and fulfil the broader aims of universities, rather than highlighting the political commitment and practices of inclusion and equity work.

The role of research for university departments are therefore shaped and/or influenced by institutionally directed needs and agendas as well as those posed by concerns for inclusion and equity. The importance of research produced by practitioners working in this area concern the ways in which research questions are inextricable linked to organisational as well as political agendas. The practitioner is therefore called upon to research the organisational structures they themselves occupy (i.e. how power structures shape their practice): including the part their practices play in re-producing and shaping these structures.

To re-cap the arguments presented so far. Firstly, practitioners occupy multiple roles and positions within and across various educational settings. These multiply located practices provide very useful insights for the development of inclusion and equity work across cultures and agendas. Secondly, practitioners have the potential to feed back their 'research findings' directly into the organisations they research. This feedback system can influence the development of their own practices and understandings of lifelong learning policy in a more grounded way. Finally, practitioners can evaluate lifelong learning policies as developed and shaped within their main place of employment, monitoring the impact on the practice of equity and inclusion work.

I am going to argue in this paper that action research offers many possible methods for the development of this form of practitioner research within inclusion and equity work.

What is Action Research?

Kurt Lewin (1946) was the first to term research concerned with drawing together the dual role of theory and action to bring about change, Action Research. This involved in Lewin's formulation spiral cycles of *planning, acting, observing* and *reflection*. Later developments use the term action research in a different sense. For example, Rapoport (1970, p.1) emphasises the dual nature of action through an 'aim to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable framework.' However, other advocates have taken exception to the focus on social science (for example, Stenhouse, 1983) claim that action research should contribute towards a theory of education and teaching that is accessible to teachers.

Nonetheless, action research as a whole is distinct from other forms of more traditional research, i.e., those directed by the scientific method. This type of research takes as its starting point a problem, followed by a proposed solution or new theory. A testable statement is then deducted from the new theory (hypothesis), this is then tested by methods of observation or experiment and lastly a preference between the competing theories is established. Through this method of investigation subjects become objects of study, they do not input into the way the research questions are formulated or the way the research is carried out, etc. In short, the realities of their lived experiences are separated by the research aims of objectivity.

Conversely, action research came to be viewed as a way to democratise the research process through a commitment to collaboration between all participants (including the researcher) at all stages of the research. The experiences of the participants and the knowledge they have are central in forming the research questions, planning and acting, etc. For example, advocates claim that action research is interactive rather than a controlling entity. It forms a paradigm of mutual understanding (Habermas, 1971) because, as Kemmis and McTaggart (1982) claim, participants of action research aim for mutual understanding over the co-ordination of subsequent actions. Applied, action research, is not about social conformity (in the way positivism aims to make generalisable theoretically deductive universal laws), but is about social justice.

Models of Action Research

Various models of action research have been developed with different objectives and within different disciplinary fields. For example:

12. 1. Action research as a form of politically informed activity (which already has a history in community development and critical social sciences);
13. 2. Action research can be a process of problem solving, for example, to bring about change in the culture of organisations;
14. 3. Action research can be a process to develop and evaluate professional practice. This type of research is known for example as professional action research and has a tradition within the teaching profession for example.

Practitioner Action Research

Professional action research (P-A-R) is concerned with developing professional practice. Winter (1989) argues that the two central components underpinning P-A-R are self-evaluation and professional development. Professionals are thought to be well placed to initiate and carry out the investigation and development of practices and understandings in which they are involved. Therefore P-A-R describes a viable mode of organising educational research whilst drawing from the ideal of developing professional practice. Action research is therefore considered to be an extension of professional work, not an addition to it.

Professional action research can be conceived of as an individual exercise. that is, one that is directed by the development of one's own professional practice. However, this approach may not be useful for incorporating the experiences of people we work with, or on behalf of. For example professional action research may not necessarily be directed or guided by a concern for power and powerlessness.

Participatory Action Research

Within the field of continuing education, issues of inclusion and equity may correspond to the guiding principles found within the action research process. For example, principles and practices have been developed to empower groups (i.e. those who participate in the research) through collaborative method and aims of shared learning. This is important because it emphasises the political aspects of knowledge production. More specifically, advocates of participatory action research do try to practice with a radical commitment that goes beyond the usual institutional boundaries, e.g. Fals-Borda and Rahman (1991).

Winter's (1989) argues that within a mass education system, higher education will have to be more responsive to processes of negotiating accountability to clients. A greater emphasis will be placed on professional evaluation of practice in order to learn from the experience of those demands. Moreover, decisions usually made instinctively will have to be made accountable and understandable and face the challenge of satisfying the complexities and varying demands of highly competent adults.

Participatory action research may be useful in addressing such a demand as it takes a very important starting point (and one that appears, in my experience, to be similar to the practices of many access and equity workers). At the centre of this research and practice are the lived experiences of people and the knowledge. Hence the knowledge and experiences of groups are honoured and valued.

More specifically participatory action research aims to:

- produce knowledge and action directly useful to a group of people through, for example, research, adult education and action;
- aims to empower people through a process of constructing and using their own knowledge. This is the meaning of 'conscientization' at term popularised by Paulo Friere (1970);
- having an authentic commitment to the process of genuine collaboration. This involves working with democratic values and to honour the wisdom of the people involved.

These principles may already be evident within the systems of developing and managing access and equity projects within higher education. However, what may be lacking from this work are the collaborative process of reflection and reflexivity. Reflection and reflexivity are central aspects of action research which open up spaces for participation and dialogue between all those who are and will be effected by change (through discussion groups for example). Reflection is the term given to critical questioning about, for example, the accepted knowledge base underpinning one's practice and also how these practices are framed by the institutions within which we work. Furthermore, the role of reflexivity in the work of lifelong learning has been highlighted by Coffield (1997a & b). Coffield (1997a) claims that the concepts of lifelong learning have been developed in a way that draws differential relevance of the learning society for particular groups (a point discussed earlier). Subsequently, Coffield (1997b) goes on to suggest that rather than treating the learning society as a destination it should be used reflexively in order to monitor change.

Concluding Comments

The action research process is argued to add rigour into the system of research as reflection on understandings, action and decisions has to be formed by the views and experiences of all participants. Similarly the development of knowledge about practice for equity and inclusion will also be informed in a rigours way. This will add critical thought and analysis not only to practice and evaluation of that practice but also to the public debates about inclusion and equity issues and local and national lifelong learning policies.

At present we are not only missing the opportunity to think about and practice as action researchers, but we are also missing the opportunity to document and reflect on the forms our ideas and practices take and become. Moreover the spaces action research can open up, may provide the means by which the development and implementation of lifelong learning policies in education settings can be monitored and then, if need be, challenged.

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Social Inclusion and Adult Learning

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Abstract

In 1988, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development launched a six-nation study of adult learning and social inclusion. OECD was interested above all in answering the question: 'What works?' This workshop provides an opportunity to learn about the lessons for policy and practice from this project, and discuss their applicability in university continuing education. The background to this project lies in a growing concern over the impact of a 'knowledge society' upon social inequality and marginalisation. Most of OECDs in this area focuses on the contribution of human capital to economic growth. The risk, however, is that the general support for lifelong learning may inadvertently increase social polarisation between the majority of the population who learn across the life-span and a minority of the 'knowledge poor.' The 1998 study considered good practice in Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, Mexico, and the U.K. As well as prompting a number of questions about the nature and effectiveness of policy, the workshop will also provide an opportunity to discuss specific practical lessons.

The discourse of social exclusion

The language of social exclusion is widely used to discuss inequality and poverty in European societies. Although the term is relatively new in Britain, it has been commonplace in the European Union, where it gradually replaced use of the term 'poverty' from the early 1980s (Field, 1998). Here, although there was some scholarly discussion before 1997, usually in a European context (e.g. Room, 1995), the term only came into general currency after the Labour Party came into government. Among its first acts, the new administration created a high-level Social Exclusion Unit, to provide advice and comment on a wide range of government policy areas. In its second report, the Unit considered strategies for neighbourhood regeneration that brought together the work of a wide range of government departments and agencies; its concerns have increasingly been reflected in the Single Regeneration Budget.

Tackling educational disadvantage is one of the key challenges facing university continuing education. How does the new policy interest in social exclusion affect the environment in which we work? Many recent initiatives in university continuing education have concerned precisely those questions of economic, social, cultural, gender and ethnic inequality that are now frequently discussed under the rubric of social exclusion (Preece, 1999). In principle, then, professionals in our field have a direct interest in understanding and - where appropriate - engaging with the new policy agenda around social exclusion. It could also be argued that since continuing education is itself a cause of social exclusion, we also have a responsibility to take this issue seriously.

This paper reports on a six-nation study of lifelong learning as a means of overcoming social exclusion (OECD, 1998). The study was conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, an inter-governmental think tank whose main focus is on macro-economic policy. In crude summary, OECD might be thought of as a (by global standards) rich nations' club. The aim of the study was to examine specific initiatives within the six participating countries, with a view to identifying what measures were likely to prove particularly effective and innovative with respect to engaging with under-represented groups of learners.

OECD is not a monolithic institution. The study was initiated by its Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, which has been well-known for its radicalism and vision since the 1970s; David Istance, who previously worked in the Swansea adult education department, was a key figure in persuading OECD to sponsor this particular project. The UK was one of the six nations where fieldwork was conducted; the others were Belgium (Flanders), Mexico, Netherlands, Norway and Portugal.. While I acted as the UK researcher, Stephen McNair (then at DfEE) was an adviser to the project; Ian Nash of the *Times Education Supplement* and John Walshe of the *Irish Independent* shared responsibility for drafting the final text of the report.

Lifelong learning - intensifying exclusion?

OECD is one of a number of intergovernmental bodies that has enthusiastically embraced the concept of lifelong learning. Broadly similar messages have come in the last five years from the European Commission, UNESCO and the G8 group of really rich nations. OECD had spent the 1980s and 1990s in 'encouraging macro-economic stabilisation, structural adjustment and the globalisation of production and distribution', while secondarily paying attention to the preservation of 'societal cohesion' (Miller, 1997, 24). In its report, *Lifelong Learning for All* (OECD, 1996), the OECD encouraged governments in the advanced economies to promote lifelong learning as a source of competitiveness; such laudable aims as the 'high performance workplace' could only be realised if all citizens embraced a culture of lifelong learning. From this perspective, social exclusion was both undesirable in itself, and a potential barrier to the transition to the high performance economy.

In framing the new study, OECD argued that lifelong learning was itself a major cause of social exclusion. By generalising the discourse of permanent upskilling and updating, a new gap was being created between knowledge rich and knowledge poor. To cite the report,

> 'The development of globalising 'knowledge' economies may marginalize large groups, either for geographical reasons or because of lack of access to knowledge and learning' (OECD, 1998, 9).

Moreover, this process is a dynamic one, since

> 'the renewal of knowledge and skills is increasingly a prerequisite for meeting basic needs, for participation in economic activities, and more broadly for full and active citizenship... [Yet] those with acute learning needs are most at risk of exclusion, while being also least likely to become lifelong learners. Therefore, it is not enough to advocate lifelong learning to combat exclusion since this may exacerbate existing inequalities' (OECD, 1998, 21).

Rather, attention must be targeted 'at those most at risk' (OECD, 1998, 21).

How helpful is this to those involved professionally in continuing education? On the one hand, it has to be said that the concept of social exclusion is not particularly radical. It accepts that capitalism is the only show in town. Rather than social change, whether revolutionary or gradual, the main challenge is how to integrate the excluded into the existing order. For radical adult educators, then, this is probably at best a holding operation - it opens up opportunities for working with the disadvantaged in the short term, while holding dear to a vision of change at some stage in the distant future. However, if you accept that capitalism probably is the only show in town, then the concept of social exclusion/inclusion offers a way of humanising the system, whether in order to complement dynamic growth and tame its worst disorders, or as part of a wider and more ecologically-oriented alternative to growth. A final, pragmatic response might be that this is all we are going to get, so let's get on with it.

As well as its policy significance, the concept of social exclusion also has a theoretical dimension. On the one hand stand those rather pessimistic critics of late modernity who see today's poor as redundant. Whereas industrial capitalism needed a reserve army of labour, Zygmunt Bauman believes that today's economy needs consumers rather than producers. Unable to consume,

> 'The poor are not needed and so they are unwanted. And because they are unwanted, they can be, without much regret or compunction, forsaken' (Bauman, 1998, 91).

Manuel Castells has written in similar terms about the black holes in the informational society, pockets of redundant labour power that are irrelevant to the networked economy (Castells, 1998).

Against this elegant pessimism, David Byrne has asserted that the excluded, far from being irrelevant, supplying the labour market for 'poor work.' Thus, 'exclusion is a crucial contemporary form of exploitation', and the excluded themselves are essential components of 'the continued accumulation process in the new form of capitalism' (Byrne, 1998, 56-7). For

Byrne, then, low skills are almost a conscious counterpart of the knowledge economy. Similarly, Ulrich Beck has written in Marxist language of a 'new lumpenproletariat' in the western nations, of those who have insufficient resources to survive insecurity and are overwhelmed by events. For Beck, such individuals are characterised by a 'Danger Biography' rather than a 'Risk Biography' (Beck, 1997, 254-6). Their exclusion is legitimated by the prevalent discourse of lifelong learning, in which the excluded themselves are blamed for their individual failure to return to education and acquire new skills and up-to-date qualifications.

The OECD study, then, should be of interest to all who are professionally active in continuing education, whether as providers or as researchers. The fact that OECD is taking an interest in the area of adult learning and social inclusion is itself significant, as is the fact that the UK government decided to support the study. This in turn provides an opportunity to consider how continuing education might be more integrally coupled with other inclusion strategies such as local economic regeneration, welfare reform, Education Action Zones, or anti-racism initiatives.

What works?

More specifically, the OECD study was concerned with identifying approaches and methods that appear to work in a variety of different contexts. Many of the findings will be reasonably familiar to UK practitioners, particularly those who have been involved in widening participation initiatives (or who are familiar with the writings of Veronica McGivney). Moreover, readers can now consult the report, which was published in mid-1998.

However, it is worth briefly summarising some of the main messages in two main areas: research and policy. On research, the report had some strong words. The research agenda, it concluded, was still 'to be developed.' Indeed,

> 'Though there is now widespread attention to lifelong learning as a key policy aim for OECD countries, and the adult education research tradition notwithstanding, the research base to inform that aim remains surprisingly ill-developed '(OECD, 1998, 46).

Particular weaknesses include the relations between the individual, formal institutionalised learning, and informal and non-formal learning. Whether or not the shortcomings are as bad as suggested, the fact that the criticisms are so strongly voiced should in itself cause concern in the research community. In Britain, where related criticisms have been made of educational research more broadly, there may be a particular need to improve communications between researchers and end users.

On policy, the report made eleven key points:

- the study showed that it is perfectly possible to engage with excluded groups and make a difference, even though many of those concerned had been written off by policy-makers as hopeless or costly;
- adult learning is often a sound public investment, but is rarely recognised as such by policy

makers because of its marginal status;

- small-scale but focused funding is often more effective than less targeted large scale programmes;
- innovative energy in grassroots initiatives must be supported in ways that do not constrain initiative through excessive bureaucracy or departmental boundary disputes, with all that then follows for partnership based working;
- informality should not mean tolerating second best materials, settings, and staff;
- to be effective, programmes must be seen to be relevant to the learners, and this means that the adults themselves must be heard, particularly if they are at risk of exclusion;
- learning must be accessible and tailored to individuals;
- empowerment means identifying and growing local leadership, and giving participants a greater sense of control over their lives;
- as well as building individual skills and knowledge, it is important to enhance community capacities;
- new work-related learning should reflect those skills that equip adults for changing labour markets, and these may be in particularly short supply among adults who left school some years ago;
- adult learning fosters social capital, and in excluded communities more should be done to build networks, contact chains and community structures.

As is to be expected from any 'best practice' study, some of these are very familiar messages. Others may be less widely acknowledged already. However, taken together they form a convenient checklist of qualities against which to benchmark any new policies and programmes, now and in the future.

Discussion

How much does this study matter? Directly, it will have a limited impact. In terms of influence, OECD stands somewhere between the EU's policy institutions and UNESCO. Its function is concerned almost entirely with the critique and development of policy in various areas, primarily but not exclusively in terms of its effects on the global economy. Since its membership consists of the world's wealthier nations (chiefly but not exclusively western), its main audience consists of relatively senior policy-makers, and much of its work results in inter-ministerial debates, the OECD has influence if not - as does the EU - direct powers. However, that influence is relatively weak in the more affluent nations, like Britain, where the OECD is one of many authoritative voices to which government pays a modicum of attention; moreover, the Minister who authorised the UK's participation has long since moved on. The report has had a little more impact in Norway (which is a relatively small country) and Mexico (which is relatively large, but lacks the infrastructure and resources of most other OECD members).

In one area, the report certainly should have some impact. The comments on research represent a substantial challenge to the research community in continuing education. Two questions need answering: (a) is there anything in the critique? (b) how best to respond? My own view is that there is no point in being too defensive about this, particularly if we are to investigate the ways in which lifelong learning (albeit perhaps unintentionally) is increasing exclusion rather than reducing it.

Indirectly, the OECD report is likely to influence matters more by helping to raise the general profile of adult learning. In this sense, OECD publications are part of a wider process of policy change; by slowly shifting the climate in which decisions are taken, such publications do open up possibilities for professionals in the field. If it helps open doors, and encourages debate over the role of adult learning in addressing social exclusion, then that is no bad thing.

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Mainstreaming LAE: Has It Widened Participation?

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Faith Butt has worked at the University of Surrey since 1986 holding a number of roles including Continuing Education Officer and latterly that of Executive Assistant to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching & Learning. She was responsible for the planning and direction of the mainstreaming of Liberal Adult Education within the University. Her present responsibilities include the formulation of strategy for teaching and learning which includes widening participation. Faith is currently writing up her PhD, at the University of Reading, which is a case study concerning Student Influence on Policy Implementation with higher education with specific reference to the mainstreaming exercise. She has been a member of UACE Council since 1990 and is regional convenor of the South East CVE Network. During Professor Oglesby's time as Head of School, Educational Studies at the University of Surrey they collaborated closely on the funding and planning of the Combined Studies Programme from which data for this workshop has been collated.

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Abstract

As institutions prepare to formulate learning and teaching strategies which include widening participation for the Higher Education Funding Council for England it seems an appropriate moment to reflect on whether or not the mainstreaming exercise has actually facilitated the widening of participation in the former responsible body institutions. This paper examines the background to the mainstreaming of CE. The CE review was part of a package of measures to assist the development of greater flexibility in higher education and increase in numbers of students on degree/award bearing courses. Almost five years on and in the light of an emerging definition of widening participation, student records and practice in two institutions in the old Liberal Adult Education sector are analysed with a view to establishing whether the profile of the mainstreamed Responsible Body programmes can provide a basis for an institution to claim widening participation. The conclusion is that the data does not support such a claim.

Mainstreaming LAE

The evidence on which this section of the paper is based is drawn mainly from a UAce occasional paper no 17, Continuing Education in the Mainstream: the funding issues (1996) and from the HEFCE papers concerning the mainstreaming debate in the early 1990s. From the first paper are highlighted some of the fears, hopes, and speculation on the effects of CE mainstreaming as perceived by the field and as related to some of the debate taking place within the funding council.

It should be stressed that this section focuses on the debate as it related to liberal adult education (LAE), and not to continuing vocation education (CVE) or continuing education research. Those are two other stories for another time.

Context for the Review

- The main context for reviewing CE funding in the early 90s was;
- the shape of the higher education system following removal of the binary divide, and;
- the pressures from then Government policies.

The structure of the HE system post the binary divide

The PCFC and UGC had been merged to form the HEFCE, and there was a desire to remove as far as possible any inequalities of treatment between the two sectors. The pressure for comparability, if not standardisation of funding across the two sectors, was evident in the continuing reduction of non-formula funding, and RB funding for CE was non-formula funding *par excellence*.

Another pressure was to resolve post-binary anomalies and attempt to rationalise as far as possible operations across the two sectors.

Efficiency gains had also to be made for the HEFCE as well as the rest of the HE sector, and one of the most immediate targets was to look at those areas which had to be dealt with through non-formula funding and expensive manpower time.

CE was not being singled out for this treatment: a number of areas were being looked at, most notably the funding of teaching and research, but also smaller fields, such as the funding of minority subjects. However, given that there was so much to rationalise across the two sectors, why was CE chosen as one of the first areas to investigate?

Government policy

The predominant guiding influence behind the revision of the CE funding policy was the current letter of guidance from the then Secretary of State which requested that:

- the Council consider measures to promote developments which would assist in achieving the required expansion of student numbers with greater efficiency;
- CE should include particular attention to the needs of employers and of the economy and contribute to the national training targets recently established (i.e. concerned with CVE not LAE).

General measures across HEFCE

At the same time *measures were being looked at generally* across the HEFCE in relation to:

- more extensive use of credit accumulation for degree courses;
- more intensive courses;
- more effective use of existing buildings and equipment.

It was thought that CE might, in a small way, be able to contribute to the first and the third, but was unlikely to contribute to the second. It was also being predicted at the time that a greater part of the predicted expansion might be through mature student numbers, studying both during the day and the evening, which would add, again in a small way, to greater use of the plant.

CE was not being singled out for special treatment. It was being looked at along with reviews of part-time studies, widening participation and access issues to which CE related very closely.

Other initiatives which had a bearing on managing expansion within financial constraints were Sir Idris Pearce's report on management of the capital estate in HE, which pointed out that large chunks of expensive plant and resources were not being fully utilised on a 5 day week, 12 month year basis. Following on from this, but with a emphasis on academic matters, was an initiative on the Review of the Academic Year, and a discussion of semesterisation and/or a four term year, led by Lord Flowers.

Also happening at the same time and with a bearing on the CE thrust, were the two initiatives from the PCFC and the UGC respectively. These were the

Accelerated and Intensive Routes Initiative (PCFC) and the

Initiative to encourage Flexibility in Course Provision (UGC)

In July 1992 50% of the successful bids for the Flexibility programme aimed in one way or another to increase accessibility to award bearing courses, and most of the others contributed similarly to staff or student development in promoting new forms of teaching and learning.

If you review the later circulars of the UFC, before it translated into the HEFCE, you can see that the *runes* are there to be read for the directions the Council was likely to move in terms of the government's White Paper on HE and the thrust in expanding student numbers and how this might be best achieved. The CE review became part of a package of measures to assist the development of greater flexibility in higher education and increase in numbers of students on degree/award bearing courses.

CE Review Consultation Paper

During the period May-June 1992 there were a number of meetings within the HEFCE to discuss the CE review paper and what might go into the consultation paper.

The purpose of the CE review was

(i) to make recommendations on CE funding policy in order to achieve the strategic objectives of HE by taking into account:
- the types of programmes offered;
- the level of operation;
- the funding mechanisms;
- the monitoring processes;
- the student body;

in order

(ii) to consider the extent to which CE contributed to the policy objectives of the HEFCE in
- improving access to initial and continuing GHE for mature and part-time students and for students from a broader range of social educational and ethnic backgrounds:
- increasing institutions' contributions to industry, public service, the professions and other areas of society through teaching, scholarship and research undertaken in a high quality and cost-effective manner.

The questions being asked at the start of the review, and the tentative answers, included the following:

1. Why are we funding CE?
2. should it be free standing or an integral part of the HE system

3. should it be self-financing

Answers:

- CE seen as gateway to HE;
- widening participation;
- increasing access;
- encouraging updating;

What are we funding, and at what rates?

Answers:

- general subject studies;
- professional development work;
- research;

Should we aim for continuity with mainstream funding, development funding and research or continue to fund simply by numbers.

How are we measuring volume?
Answers: CER statistics

How are we monitoring activity?

Answers:

- when we have decided what we want to fund then we can aim to monitor it;
- the value for money principle should operate here;
- any system should be clear, transparent, and simple.

How are we measuring quality?

Answers:

- we have no mechanisms for measuring quality. The regional development agents try and measure it in the PICKUP programmes, and subject advisers try to do it;
- there must be better ways of doing it through an external measure of quality assessments. In a paper to the HEFCE Council on 24 November 1992 it was recognised that the mainstreaming of CE might have the following effects:

- restructuring part-time non-vocational CE courses might transform them into award-bearing/credit-bearing modules which would count towards a qualification. Doing this would make funds available for universities which did not have Responsible Body status and had hitherto not received earmarked CE funding but which nevertheless offered short award bearing courses. This might be of particular benefit to the OU;

- a degree of distortion as courses were moulded into structures for which they were not originally conceived;
- the enrolment of students on award bearing courses which they have no realistic prospect or intention of completing. This would impact on institutions' performance indicators;
- those universities currently in receipt of earmarked CE funding might need to redesignate and possibly lengthen their courses in order to avoid losing much of their income;
- as an alternative course of action, promotion of a CAT rating system which would encompass all teaching provision;
- the bringing of CE courses within the quality assurance framework alongside other teaching provision.

To those who say the funding council should have foreseen the results of LAE mainstreaming, the answer would probably have been that the detailed results were the business of CE departments and their host institutions. The Funding Council's objectives lay within the government's general policy on bringing the two HE sectors into alignment in respect of funding, standards, and expanding student numbers. The general view all along was that if institutions valued their CE provision they would secure it within their funding. The diversity and the detail resulting from mainstreaming was a matter for the institutions and their academic autonomy.

The consultation paper was issued in December 1992 and the new funding policy introduced from 1994. In the second section of this presentation some of those issues are going to be considered five years down the line, i.e.

- Did the traditional LAE student population absent itself from classes after mainstreaming?
- Did mainstreaming have the effect of attracting new sections of the population to its courses?
- To what extent did CE manage the transition to university award bearing courses?
- What impact did CE approaches to teaching mature students have on the rest of the institution?
- Can the quality teaching and academic standards of CE courses compare with internal university courses?

Has it widened participation?

As institutions prepare to formulate learning and teaching strategies which include widening participation for the Higher Education Funding Council for England it seems an appropriate moment to reflect on whether or not the mainstreaming exercise has actually facilitated the widening of participation in the former responsible body institutions.

From one perspective it would appear that the mainstreaming exercise provided a golden opportunity for the Responsible Body institutions to move into the part-time local student undergraduate market which had always traditionally been the preserve of the 'new' universities. Almost five years on and in the light of an emerging definition of widening participation, the Universities of Newcastle and Surrey have analysed their databases to see exactly what has been achieved in relation to the new criteria.

The analysis uses the criteria laid by Higher Education Funding Council for England in the recent consultation on Widening Participation - students from poor backgrounds, students with disabilities, students with non-traditional qualifications including those who missed out on HE opportunities first time round. However, it was immediately apparent that if we were looking for a change in the student profile we should begin with a number of more basic criteria - notably the age and gender profiles of the students which had been very atypical of HE as a whole when mainstreaming took place. It also seemed relevant to look at ethnicity which Higher Education Funding Council for England no longer considers a major issue in respect of full-time participation.

The Adult Education Market is surprisingly volatile

Very few, if any, Responsible Body universities kept an individualised student record before mainstreaming and HESA made it an obligation.

Anecdotally, however, colleagues referred to the relatively static nature of the student body. It is impossible to demonstrate retrospectively if this was so; what is certain is that since the introduction of assessment at the University of Surrey there has been a considerable turnover in the student body from year to year.

We found that, at both Newcastle and Surrey, around 50% of new registrations in any year did not re-register the next year. This raises several important marketing concerns - not least that the available pool of potential students will eventually be exhausted. After the first year the rate of drop-out falls but student retention is very limited.

Number leaving after	First registering in 1994
1 year	897
2 years	381
3 years	239
4 years	254
still attending	317

UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

(note: this is not the sum total of 1994 registrations - many students dip in and out of the programme)

In 1996 1,115 students registered to the first time that year and have not re-registered; in 1997 1,203 students registered who had not re-registered and only 450 of the new registrations re-enrolled in 1998.

This prompted a closer analysis of the 317 students who had been in continuous attendance since the mainstreamed programme began. 224 of these students were over 60 when they enrolled on the programme and a further 69 over 50. Almost half of the students were studying Art History; Music was the second most popular subject with a limited uptake of English and History. Only 2 of the remaining students were under 30. They were both studying English.

In 1996 168 new students aged under 30 enrolled; only 8 remain on the programme. In 1998, a further 132 new students aged less than 30 enrolled. The problem is not attracting young students but keeping them.

Comparative age distribution - Newcastle and Surrey

The figures above would appear to indicate that the age profile had not moved a great deal over the past five years. However, looking at the total populations rather than the students in continuous study, a marked shift was noticeable in the first years following mainstreaming. The increase in participation by younger students has not, however, been sustained.

Year of first registration	Surrey		Newcastle	
	under 50	over 50	under 50	over 50
	%	%	%	%
1994	25	75	36	64
1996	34	66	52	48
1998	34	66	52	48

Newcastle has almost twice as many students in their 20s and 30s (31%) compared with Surrey (16%).

In both institutions there was an increase in the numbers of younger students in the early part of the period but thereafter the ratio of over 50s to under 50s has remained static.

Comparative Gender Distribution - Newcastle and Surrey

Until relatively recently women were always underrepresented in main stream HE. It was generally assumed that the converse was true for adult education and we were therefore looking for an increase in participation by men. The table below shows that for the two institutions surveyed there has been no significant change in the sex profile of students since mainstreaming.

Year of first registration	Surrey		Newcastle	
	male	female	male	female
	%	%	%	%
1994	23	77	36	64
1996	27	73	37	63
1998	28	72	36	64

Ethnicity

Another sector of the population for whom the mainstreaming of Liberal Adult Education provision might have facilitated access was the ethnic minorities. Both institutions cover former Responsible Body areas which include wards or districts with large ethnic minority populations, for example in Surrey there are such wards in Woking and Croydon where a reasonable range Liberal Adult Education courses are on offer.

However, as the table below shows mainstreaming has failed to widen participation in this respect.

Year of first registration	Surrey		Newcastle	
	ethnic origin = white	other ethnic origins	ethnic origin = white	other ethnic origins
1994	1915	21 (1%)	1744	12 (0.7%)
1996	2830	41 (1.4%)	3127	43 (1.4%)
1998	2475	32 (1.3%)	2222	53 (2.4%)

Students with disabilities

Another possible sector where part-time accredited provision might have provided a 'way in' for a new group of students was in the area of disabilities. Many courses are very local and might have appealed to such students.

In fact the percentage participation by Surrey students with any form of disability has fallen over the period from 5.1% in 1994 to 2.7% in 1998. This is a fall in absolute numbers and includes the full range of disabilities returned to HESA (i.e. dyslexia, unseen disabilities such as asthma and diabetes as well as such special needs as deafness, blindness, and paraplegia).

Surrey has only 18 students who are confined to wheelchairs (and one with multiple disabilities) despite a purpose-built continuing education centre with lift access and specially equipped facilities. The few students who do come to the courses are regular 'customers', attending classes year upon year including one who is 96 years old! There is also one student who has attended no fewer than 27 classes in the last five years and another who has attended 20 including several options in sports science. Both of these students are studying for credit and have achieved qualifications on the programme. This would indicate that the lack of participation is not due to barriers caused by the facilities.

Widening Participation with non-traditional entry requirements

In some ways the failure of the Liberal Adult Education programme to reach more non-traditional students was the most disappointing aspect. Colleagues are well aware of the high levels of participation on these programmes by those who are very well qualified educationally - many of our students already have higher degrees!

However, the brochures emphasise that the classes are open to all and that there are *no* entry requirements.

Year of first registration	Surrey		Newcastle	
	Students with 'access' course	Students with GCSE equivalent	Students with 'access' course	Students with GCSE equivalent
1994	3	175	0	95
1996	8	116	0	197
1998	4	142	6	117

The percentage who enter these programmes with an access course as their highest qualification is negligible and with GCSE or similar qualifications has hovered around the 5% mark.

The final and most difficult avenue to explore was the socio-economic profile of the students. HESA and the Higher Education Funding Council for England analyse socio-economic classification by post-code and are proposing, under the new widening participation funding mechanisms, to attach a premium to students with 'poor backgrounds.' The background data which is used is both difficult to obtain and complex to use and will form the basis of further research. For the purposes of this paper, we have examined the data provided by the Higher Education Funding Council for England to institutions as Table 3: Profile of Subgroup area level for all students on part-time undergraduate level courses.

In the case of the University of Surrey almost all the students in this table are 'Liberal Adult Education ' students, in the case of the University of Newcastle approximately two thirds are in this category.

Note that the last year for which this data is available in 1996.

	Surrey		Newcastle	
	1996 number	1996 %	1996 number	1996 %
Group 1	2076	57	1180	41
Group 2	912	25	734	25
Group 3	557	15	653	22
Group 4	94	3	344	12
no of students from categories normally associated with very high unemployment	10		95	

It is immediately apparent that the mainstreamed Liberal Adult Education programme at the University of Surrey is completely failing to attract students from poor backgrounds - Newcastle is fairing a little better!

Conclusion

We have examined student records and practice in these two institutions in the old Liberal Adult Education sector with a view to establishing whether the profile of the mainstreamed Responsible Body programmes would provide a basis for an institution to claim widening participation. We stress that we have used the new criteria for widening participation rather than criteria which Higher Education Funding Council for England laid down in the run-up period to the introduction of mainstreaming.

In these two completely different institutions we have, however, found no evidence that these mainstreamed Liberal Adult Education programmes are attracting new or diverse student bodies into HE.

European Universities: How Accessible Are They For Adults?

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Abstract

This paper will focus on the early findings of a comparative research project funded by the EU under the TSER programme on the access of non-traditional adults to higher education in the UK, Republic of Ireland, Belgium, Germany, Spain and Sweden. Drawing on the research findings the paper will discuss what makes a university accessible for adults. To what extent has recent concern with lifelong learning in Europe resulted in widening participation? Key concepts such as social inclusion, non-traditional and adult students will also be outlined within the framework of different European cultural contexts.

Workshop Format:
The workshop will be participative. The aim is to involve participants in responses to the early findings of the research and in particular to reflect upon and comment on the way the research team has used key concepts.

Introduction

This is a work in progress paper reporting on some initial findings of a comparative European project entitled 'University Adult Access Policies and Practices Across the European Union, and their Consequences for the Participation of Non-Traditional Adults (Project number : SOE 2-CT97-2021). The three-year project, which began January 1998, is funded by the European Commission within their Targeted Socio-Economic Research Programme. Six partners are involved although other countries are being surveyed through sub-contracts. The partners are:

- University of Louvain: Belgium - Etienne Bourgeois;
- University of Warwick: UK - Barbara Merrill;
- National University of Ireland, Maynooth: Ireland - Tom Collins;
- University of Geottingen: Germany - Peter Alheit;
- University of Barcelona: Spain - Ramon Flecha;
- University of Stockholm: Sweden -Agnieszka Bron.

All partners had previous working links with each other prior to the project either through European adult education networks or other research projects. This was considered to be an essential criterion for the success of the project.

Besides raising issues related to the policies and practice of adults in European higher education the project also highlights issues about comparative research, in particular, the different conceptual uses of key terms across the European Union and the problems and concerns about working transnationally.

Why Choose This Topic? Background to the Research

All the partners are committed to widening access for adults to HE, particularly for those groups who are under-represented. The six partners had previous experience of working in this field. An earlier pilot project between the UK and Belgium (Bourgeois, Duke, Guyot and Merrill: 1999) laid the groundwork for a wider European survey. The aim was to undertake a comparative and cross-disciplinary study as partners felt that studies of adult participation are largely descriptive, and restricted to a single scientific perspective. The project addresses the role of higher education as a potential agency of social integration within a period of economic change and transformation, and the inaccessibility of higher education for some groups. At the same time policy makers at national level and in the European Commission (European Social Policy White Paper, 1994) were becoming concerned with the need for lifelong learning and social inclusion, largely to ensure future economic growth rather than social equilibrium. Lifelong learning has become the 'trendy' language of the moment with governments endorsing it as the cure for economic problems. The research team aims to look critically at the concept, not taking it on wholesale as used by policy makers.

European universities are also having to respond to social and economic changes. In recent years expansion has generally been the pattern in many European universities to the extent that some would claim they are now mass universities. Such factors have raised debates about the purpose and nature of universities. Part of this debate is about who gets let in and who does not. For the research team democratisation of universities is an important principle. Knowledge and access to it should not be the preserve of an elite.

The aims of the research are identified as follows:

- to assess the effectiveness of access policies and practices for adults in universities and higher education institutions across the EU, with particular reference to socially excluded groups and communities;
- to identify barriers to the participation of the excluded;
- to identify and propose changes which will enhance non-traditional adult participation and win for the EU the social and economic gains of inclusion.

The research will:

- identify, analyse and compare adult student participation patterns;
- survey and assess the variety of access policies and practices;
- identify macrosocial and institutional factors leading to the exclusion of adults;
- produce new knowledge which will contribute to increasing access and participation of adult

groups which have traditionally been excluded;

- identify and propose avenues of change to enhance the participation of socially excluded groups.

The overall aim is, therefore, to influence and change policy and practice within Europe by asking two key questions. What makes an HE institution accessible? Which departments/programmes/faculties are the most open?

Research Methodology in a Transnational Context

As with any research project the nature of the research methodology and outcomes are shaped, to a certain extent, by the criteria advocated by the funders. Recommendations for improving policy and practice as well as developing research in the field are important criteria for TSER projects. However, these coincided with what we wanted to do.

Engaging in cross-national research is interesting and challenging, although occasionally problematic. Despite the geographical closeness and growing cultural similarities through globalisation differences remain. For example European universities have developed from different research and discipline traditions. Discourse differs within and across disciplines, shaped by national, social, economic and political structures:

> 'Working in such teams is also a learning process for its members who each bring to the group their own perspectives and ideology as well as the culture of the institution in which they work' (Merrill, 1997: 2).

Research teams, therefore, need to be aware of the necessity for good communication and understanding if outcomes are to be successful. The UK team is at an advantage as meetings and most documents are in English. However, the Warwick researchers are acutely aware of being 'ethnocentric' in the sense of assuming that others will speak English. Hantrais and Ager (1985: 29) point out that: 'English is generally assumed to be the lingua franca of international research, confirming that there is no need to master a foreign tongue in order to collaborate effectively with members of a different speech community'.

Methodological emphasis, in this project, is on qualitative methods, in particular, life history interviews of adult students. Quantitative approaches are also included to provide an overview of adult student participation rates in HE and identifying issues to be explored in the interviews from a questionnaire. The approach is innovative in that it considers the research questions at three levels: macro, meso and micro and the inter-relationship and interaction between the three. The macro level focuses on national policies on access while the meso looks at the institutional level and the role of organisational theory in relation to changing institutions. This includes the impact that adult students may have in changing institutional practices. Lastly the micro level centres on the biographies of adult students and their experiences of higher education.

The various research tasks, such as the collection of institutional and national data, the questionnaire and interviews are broken up into distinct work packages each managed by a different partner. Each partner has identified 5-6 case study institutions, chosen to reflect the range of higher education institutions in their country.

Experiencing Conceptual Confusion

Clarifying the definitional and interpretational meanings of key concept used in different countries is an essential early step in any transnational research project. Issues and concepts which each team in our project took for granted within their own culture suddenly became problematic. In particular, differences became apparent in the way that each partner used the terms adult student, non-traditional adult student, access and higher education. As a starting point we learnt about each other's educational system to assist in the process of cultural understanding. Cultural contexts are important and have to be taken into account. As Smith (1975: 282) asserts: 'How can one faithfully translate or reproduce the ambiguity and complexity of one culture into another culture's terminology?' For example the term 'adult student' does not exist in Sweden or Germany as many people do not enter university until they are in their mid twenties. A 'normal' age student in these two countries would be considered a mature student in the UK. Both the UK and Ireland have a nationally recognised age for determining a mature student. The age is higher in Ireland than the UK; 23 compared to 21. In Spain it is generally accepted as being 25 as examinations are available for those aged 25 and over wanting to enter HE. Other partners had to use their judgement to decide a suitable age definition for an adult student in their country for the purposes of this research.

One of the most problematic concepts, for a number of reasons, is 'non-traditional adult student'. One of the conditions of the funding was to arrive at a common definition of the term which could be applied across Europe. Early team discussions revolved around the problems of using such a term because of the connotations of labelling, particularly by admissions tutors, in a negative sense (Williams, 1997). At the same time we wanted to make a distinction between the concepts mature student and non-traditional adult student as we want to focus on groups who have traditionally been excluded from HE yet we are aware that:

> 'Researchers' decisions about collecting and analysing data about students in higher education have involved dividing practices which have categorized and differentiated between types of students. Most often researchers have worked with the same categories as policy-makers, practitioners and government agencies. They have classified students as either standard and non-standard or traditional and non-traditional, using the polarizations that have become familiar within the discourse of access' (Webb: 1997: 65).

Although there is no alternative concept to non-traditional student continuation of the use of the term poses a dilemma for adult educators who advocate social equity policies and practices for adult access and yet at the same time need to identify such groups in order to improve policy and practice.

Adult students in Belgium and Germany are mostly those who already have some form of qualifications but who require professional updating rather than second chance students. In the UK, Ireland and Spain in particular a non-traditional adult student is perceived as a person who may lack formal qualifications and/or belong to minority or socially disadvantaged groups and/or may have been out of the education system for a long time. Factors such as class, gender, age, ethnicity and disability therefore become important. In Belgium stratification is largely not taken into account in educational research. To encompass the wide cultural differences the research team decided on the following definition of a non-traditional adult student across Europe:

> 'A new mature student entrant, (by age in respective countries) with no previous HE qualification whose participation in HE is constrained by structural factors additional to age.'

Discussing the discourse surrounding 'non-traditional adult student' led us into identifying and examining access routes into higher education for adult students. Different patterns and opportunities exist across the six participating countries. In Belgium, for example, access is more open for 18 year olds as anyone with a school leaving qualification (the CESS) has the right of entry into HE although there is a high drop-out rate after first year examinations. For an adult to enter HE in Belgium, and also in Spain and Sweden, they have to possess the school qualification. This makes it very difficult for those who were failed by initial schooling to go to university as an adult. As a result very few from lower socio-economic backgrounds get in. In Spain it is possible for adults to take an examination which is equivalent to the school qualification and while a large number of adults do sit the examination every year very few pass. Our Spanish colleagues pointed out that it is culturally biased. The Spanish education system is currently being reformed through a new law, the LOGSE, as a way of adapting the system to new socio-economic and cultural changes in a post-Franco era. This has led to greater diversity of provision at HE level but there is concern that:

> '...because we are in a process of transformation, it is possible to generate new educational policies to prevent a deeper gap between those suffering from social exclusion and those few, privileged people profiting from a better socio-economic status' (CREA, 1998:206).

More specifically CREA (the research unit at Barcelona) remark on:

> '...a social dualisation that affects the access to university. Only some specific social groups have access to higher education. The underprivileged groups have the university's door closed to them before accessing it.'

In Ireland the picture is not much brighter. Less than 6% of students in the HE sector are mature. Entry is tightly controlled through a Central Application System. Adults (23 and over) have to successfully complete an interview requirement. However such policy is currently being reviewed by the Commission on the Points System (1998):

> '...growing dissatisfaction with the existing diverse mechanisms operated by different institutions for mature student selection and at the lack of responsiveness of the existing system to the needs of mature students.'

Sweden is associated with having a good tradition and reputation in relation to adult education. Certainly a large number of adults participate in education through study circles and adult schools. Yet although the system appears to be open it is difficult for adults to enter HE as access routes are restricted. This appears to be a paradox and contradictory as adults need to either have the school qualification or be 25 years old with at least four years work experience. It is also possible to sit a university aptitude test. In Germany the federal structure produces wide variations in practice within the country. However, there appears to be three main access routes to higher education as follows:

- possession of appropriate school leaving qualifications;
- second chance students, that is, those who gain the qualifications for entry later in life through evening classes or Adult Education College;
- students of the 'third way of education', that is, those who gain their entry qualifications through work experience;

Recent expansion in the UK has enabled more adults the opportunity to enter HE through increasingly diverse routes although they are not even distributed across the system as most are found in the 'new' universities. The introduction of Access courses and APEL have facilitated entry to HE from groups who traditionally have been excluded.

In summary it is clear that in all countries there is increasing provision for alternative access routes to HE and that this student population is becoming increasingly complex and differentiated in its composition. It is most likely that these changes will enhance the participation of mature students. However, it is much less clear that they will greatly contribute towards the participation of adults from sectors generally under-represented in HE. Equally it is not clear how a general increase in mature student participation will manifest itself in more high status disciplines and professional areas. These questions will be addressed later in the project.

Each partner wrote a paper describing access routes into HE for adults in their country. Reflection on this work led to a summary of the similarities and differences as follows:

- implicit or explicit selection before entering the HE system;
- free choice of HE programmes and disciplines or choice constrained to specific programmes for adults;

- development and use of APEL schemes varies;
- policy decisions about adult access to HE is taken at either at the national or regional level or institutional level;
- programmes for adults only verses no specific targeting;
- a wide range of access routes verses a narrow range;
- a wide spectrum of entry requirements ranging from no formal qualifications to a formal examination for adults;
- differential outcomes of HE;

The emphasis in this European comparative study then reflects a concern that increased access opportunities for adults at European universities may simply replicate and reinforce structural inequalities in the broader community. By differentiating between mature students and second chance students it is possible to see that institutional processes which favour mature student access can continue to differentiate in their processes of entry into the high status and the relatively low status professions.

Comparing Adult Student Participation Rates

The research is still at the quantitative stage - interviews with adult students begin May 1999. Collection of adult student participation rates by country and case study institutions have now been completed and analysed. The institutional data was used to identify departments with high, medium and low participation rates. Three departments were then selected on this basis for an in-depth study. Questionnaires have been sent out to these particular departments in the case study institutions. We looked at new entrants (1st year students). Collecting this type of data was not straightforward. Some countries/institutions had better data sets than others. In Ireland and Spain, for example, it was very difficult to collect such data. In Ireland national data is not yet available. A recommendation to the EC would be to advocate for common categories and data sets on HE across Europe.

In terms of methodology it was also problematical in comparing data as we were not looking at the same age starting point as this is 21 in the UK but 25 in four of the other countries. Even within the UK, which when compared to the other partner countries had the most accessible and widest range of data on adult students both nationally and institutionally, it was not always possible to obtain similar sets of data from the different HE institutions. Even the national data from HESA proved problematical with several telephone calls having to be made to HESA for clarification on various aspects. For example, we discovered that the data on new entrants on undergraduate programmes does not include those in FE taking degrees. Pat Davies has also highlighted similar difficulties. These problems were further complicated when comparing across six European countries. We could not look at all the relevant factors as only the UK possessed data on ethnicity and social class. These were not viewed as significant factors in other countries. What we could compare easily was adult student participation by field of study, age, prior qualifications and gender by each degree programme.

Some similarities across countries and institutions can be found. For example adults, except in Germany favour social science subjects. In Germany humanities are the most popular. Only a small percentage of adults opt for the sciences (about 5% nationally) again with the exception of Germany where the percentage nationally is 14.1%. There is also evidence of some discrepancy between national and institutional data. In Belgium national statistics indicate that only 2% of adults participate in HE while at the University of Louvain it is 8% with some of Louvain's programmes having more adults than younger students - social sciences; 56.5% adults and 50.7% younger students. Not surprisingly the traditional universities in all six countries have the lowest percentage of adults and these tend to be limited to specific subject areas rather than spread across the curriculum, perhaps reflecting different departmental cultural attitudes towards adults.

The data revealed three different types of institutions in relation to the access of adults which we have developed into a typology of universities. The first type (the 'open' type) is designed to meet the needs of adult students. Most of these are universities with a specific profile such as distance learning or institutions set up through political reform to provide the educationally disadvantaged with better opportunities such as the University of Bremen, Germany. They have an 'integrative' strategy with all subject areas open to adults. The proportion of adults in these institutions is above the national average. The second type (the 'average' type) is where the participation of adults in the institutions matches the national average. These institutions are characterised by a 'differentiating strategy' in that access is open but confined to certain departments/subject areas. Lastly the third type (the 'closed' type) allows access to only a small number of adults. This typology identifies two main policy strategies in relation to adult access to HE; an integrative one and a differentiating one. Both strategies could be used to either promote or block adult access as the following chart illustrates:

	Integrative	differentiating
Promoting Inclusion	distance learning universities Reform universities etc	institutions with special access routes, high participation rates
Non-promoting inclusion	some traditional universities with a low rate of non-traditional adults	institutions with few access routes and low participation rates

This framework was used to identify departments for further study.

Summary

In terms of analysis, policy recommendations and theoretical development the project is still at an early stage. Analysis of the questionnaire data will take us further down this road. Reflection upon the national and institutional data and the comparison of access routes have, however, yielded some interesting issues. The processes of researching as a transnational team also provide useful research material. The research team is now looking forward to the qualitative and theoretical stages. This will involve looking at institutional strategies in relation to organisational theories (political and cultural). What, however, is visible at this stage is that there are widespread variations in access policies and practices both across Europe and within countries. Some countries, such as Spain, are clearly at the starting point while others have opened their doors to adults only to largely reinforce and reproduce the structural inequalities that already exist in society. The challenge is to persuade universities to encourage the social groups who have traditionally been excluded to enter.

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Deconstructing Outreach Policy: A Critical Examination Of The Discourses Underlying Government Policy

Sue Oosthuizen and Marie Askham

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Abstract

This workshop aims to analyse critically outreach policy and provision in adult continuing higher education, by attempting to identify the political and social values which frame and inform policy on outreach initiatives. Outreach work in adult continuing higher education is aimed at widening participation in this sector and embedding this work in institutions' conventional provision. However HEFCE funding frameworks for higher education provision may not always support these outreach initiatives, which can find themselves in unforeseen dilemmas in attempting to deliver their project objectives. This workshop will examine these issues, initially in relation to the Fenland Oral History Project and Third Age Rural Project, run through the Board of Continuing Education at the University of Cambridge with funding from the HEFCE Widened Provision initiative. The workshop will be participative, seeking to unravel some of these issues through group and plenary discussion, based on participants' experience in working in the field.

This workshop was set in the context of outreach work carried out in two HEFCE liberal adult education widened participation projects between 1995 and 1999 at the University of Cambridge Board of Continuing Education: the Fenland Oral History Project, which was targeted on rural fenland, and the Third Age Rural Project which was focused on rural Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. Both projects were aimed at older learners who had not previously participated in higher education, and both were successful in reaching their target groups[1].

The project workers noted significant barriers facing older students, despite the first signs of government attention through targeted funding. Funding was unable to address situational barriers such as replacement caring costs or poor rural public transport; nor was it able to remove institutional barriers particularly in relation to fees: further education students on state benefits are entitled to fee remission, which the projects were unable to offer; to were they able to allow students to pay course fees by instalment. The inability of institutions to embed outreach as a departmental activity without specialist funding, the distance of project workers from, and apparent irrelevance to, central policy making and the loss of outreach expertise at the project end all testified to the marginal nature of outreach work.

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[1] Full details of the methodology and results of these projects can be obtained from the authors

It was these factors which led the project workers to question official commitment to outreach and to lifelong learning for all. Outreach seemed principally to be defined in terms of mainstream activity: encouraging younger people to enter HE or encouraging the employed, aged 49 years or less, to upgrade their existing skills. These are valuable aims and this paper does not seek to denigrate them. The workshop was intended to test the seriousness of the rhetoric of lifelong learning and widened participation outside these narrowly-defined groups.

The workshop therefore aimed to examine the discourses underlying policy relating to outreach programmes in adult continuing higher education in order to answer the following questions

- At which groups is policy on outreach really aimed?
- To what extent is policy truly directed at overcoming barriers to participation?
- How should this inform institutional outreach programmes?

In order to examine outreach policy effectively, the workshop needed to take account of three sets of information. The first was the positive note on outreach provided by the then-recent white paper, *The Learning Age*:

> 'Many higher education institutions have a tradition of outreach programmes for adults which provide valuable opportunities for mature students to take on courses, which do not lead to degrees, on a part-time basis. ... This work is a vital contribution to lifelong learning and we will expected the Funding Councils, universities and colleges of higher education to attach high priority to its continuation.' (DfEE (1988) *The Learning Age* p.51)

The second focused on the lack of connection between the optimism of The Learning Age and the results from the National Adult Learning Survey, summarised below:

Definition : 'Non-learners' had not undertaken any formal learning in the past 3 years

- More women than men were non-learners;
- Non-learners were 10 years older than learners, on average;
- Less then 40% of non-learners were employed;
- Nearly 25% of non-learners were carers;
- Nearly 66% of non-learners were in the lower socio-economic grouping, and of these 29% were skilled manual; 24% were partly skilled; and 11% were unskilled;
- About 80% left school aged 16 years or under;
- 60% had obtained no qualifications at school;

- 50% said that *nothing* would encourage them to do some learning!;

[Source : DfEE (1998) The Learning Age]

And finally, any discourse relating to the development of institutional policy would need to demonstrate an understanding of external and institutional barriers to participation, some of which are outlined below (personal barriers were excluded, since time was limited):

External barriers to participation

- Cost of courses, particularly for the unwaged and unemployed;
- Availability of transport, especially in rural areas;
- The cost of alternative caring for children and other dependants;
- Social divisions of age, gender, ethnicity and class;

Institutional barriers to participation

- Ability to be flexible towards individuals, for example in taking on the additional costs of fee payment by instalment;
- Lack of central institutional funding for attention to the effects on participation of social division by class, gender, age and ethnicity;
- The marginalisation of outreach work within institutions;
- The lack of commitment to underwriting the costs of embedding outreach work within institutions;

The workshop broke up into small groups in order to undertake an analysis of recent policy texts including 'Development Priorities and Plans' and 'Individuals and Lifelong Learning' from DfEE (1999) *Education and Training*, pp. 10-11 and 37-8; The Labour Party (1997) *Lifelong Learning*, pp. 33-4; DfEE (1998) The Learning Age paras. 4.28 and 4.30 'Opening up access', pp. 50-51. Workshop members were asked to discuss the following questions in relation to the document they had been allocated:

- Which groups are addressed in policy documents and which are not?
- To what extent are the funding implications of outreach to particular groups addressed?
- What recommendations would this group make to their institutions and/or the Funding Council to ensure that outreach programmes meet their objectives in bringing marginalised groups into adult continuing higher education?

The plenary discussion agreed that, despite a rhetoric of inclusion, the discourse underlying outreach policy focussed on young people and on vocational education and training, with the result that the funding implications of outreach were not addressed. Older learners and learning without an obvious vocational element were excluded, in contradiction of the principle of lifelong learning. Rather, a very narrow definition of lifelong learning underpinned policy: that lifelong learning was related to the training needs of those in employment and under the age of 50.

The workshop agreed the following recommendations:

- That all groups in need should be identified and targeted, and that directed funding should be provided to meet these needs;
- Groups should be funded to undertake access and other outreach courses in order that they can themselves decide their learning needs;
- Institutions should be monitored to ensure that an identifiable percentage of central resource is allocated in this way.

Access and Equity - Difference in Approach but Similar Goals: Lessons from Australia and the UK

Geoff Layer and Glen Postle

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Abstract

Whilst there is no doubting the similar in Access and Equity issues within universities in the UK and Australia, the process used by each country has been very different. Major changes have taken place within HE in both countries and in each there has also been change of central government. This workshop seeks to explain the development of Access and Equity programmes, assess their impact and to address the way forward for each country. In both cases there has been a desire to ensure that those able to benefit from advanced study should be able to do so. This commitment is found too in the Robbins Report in the UK, subsequently reinforced in the Dearing Review and in the Dawkins reforms in Australia. These reforms and reviews had some common outcomes and particularly focus on the role of HE as a contributor to the nation through technological, social and economic advancement. Within that commitment is a desire to see social change through education as a means of social re-engineering. Interestingly, governments of both the right and the left share this ideological commitment though for different reasons, the right believing that this advances the individual and the left looking for contribution to the common good. This workshop draws on the experience of both models and reflects on achievements and challenges to date.

IN CYBERSPACE

Capacity Building through New Technology

Rob Harrison and Angie Piésold

Rob Harrison has worked in Access and Guidance at Sheffield Hallam University three and a half years, initially as Continuing Education Projects Co-ordinator, and now as Lifelong Learning Manager. He is involved in co-ordinating and managing a diverse range of projects and initiatives to support widening participation and continuing vocational/ professional development. A growing area of responsibility is to develop our networks and partnerships across the region with FE, TECs, community organisations, local authorities, employers and funding agencies. This means he is closely associated with the formulation and implementation of the University's lifelong learning strategy and policy, and integrating project work with new partnerships such as the University for Industry and Lifelong Learning Partnerships.

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Abstract

The ubiquitous presence of information-communication technology (ICT) is now recognised and accepted as an essential feature of working life, education, training, leisure and social activity. In consequence, many cities in the UK (and internationally) have begun to develop ICT strategies to manage its sheer impact on all aspects of the economy and the community. Sheffield Hallam University is engaged in a major initiative to develop 'capacity building' by generating the awareness and skills to exploit the ICT potential, mediated through locally based community organisations. The SHU-CAN (Community Access Network) is part of its strategy to promote social inclusion and widen participation.

The Context

The SHU-CAN (Sheffield Hallam University Community Access Network) project was developed to explore the scope for capacity building within groups using new technology - what does 'capacity building' mean in this context? There are many definitions. For example, the Community Development Foundation defines it as:

> '[Capacity building is] development work that strengthens the ability of community organisations to build their structures, systems, people and skills' (http://www.cdf.org.uk/)

Our starting point was that an organisation and the individuals within it would become more able to participate in the life of the wider community if equipped with the same information and access to the same resources. We are moving to a society where increasing amounts of information are being made available through electronic means and access to education is also being created through the Internet. So, giving voluntary organisations the means to access this information, both by providing resources and the means to use them through training and support, must be creating a 'capacity building' opportunity. Giving these groups access to the resources needed to become 'information providers' on the Internet also opens up potential to become more visible and more accessible to everyone. The positive impact on community empowerment and social inclusivity must not be under-estimated.

Background

The SHU-CAN Project arose through discussions in Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) about its strategic contribution to community capacity building in the region. In recent years, the use of electronic communication within the University has transformed the way that individuals work with each other and their partners and contacts outside the institution. There has also been an initiative to develop the 'Virtual Campus', encouraging students to use conferencing and email as part of the support structure for their study, as well as promoting distance learning provision. Stepping outside the institution however (in 1997), and using the Internet was largely unheard of. The possibility of exploring and developing the use of this enabling technology by voluntary and community organisations in the region was therefore the springboard from which the SHU-CAN project was launched.

Funding from the BT University Award Scheme has enabled the University to offer voluntary organisations access to the Internet. The package included the resources needed to connect to the Internet (a telephone line, a computer and modem), support and training. Web pages, once developed by the organisations would be hosted on the University's web server (see http://www.shu.ac.uk/shucan/). Groups without existing computing skills were included, as the emphasis was on promoting capacity within organisations involved in community development, rather than enriching already Information Technology (IT) literate organisations.

Why?

At this time, SHU had begun to develop a positive relationship with local community organisations through its many initiatives directed towards inclusion and widening participation - for example supporting local literacy campaigns, black student development, raising aspirations with parents and schools, and community regeneration. It also has an explicit commitment to regional and local development, which embraces concepts of support for the skill development of disadvantaged communities in the region.

The project specifically wanted to explore in what ways access to the Internet could give benefits to groups and organisations working with socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged communities. Other work within the institution to create routes and pathways into higher education for people without the usual academic background supported this approach. The timing for this initiative also coincided with the development of an awareness at national level of the need to find new and innovative ways to create opportunities for social inclusion, and for lifelong learning.

Assumptions and expectations

The SHU-CAN project began with certain premises:-

- Giving voluntary and community organisations access to the Internet would enable improved communication and access to information, which would in some way build the 'capacity' of those organisations and the communities with which they work;
- There would be a knock on effect whereby members of the organisations, as partners in the project, would find ways to tackle issues of 'social exclusion'. Giving access to the technology would create information flows that could be seen as empowering the individuals and the organisations involved;
- There would be some impact on the organisations that would result in positive outcomes, and regeneration and community development would be supported;
- Use of the technology in the voluntary sector would reflect the way it was perceived to enhance the culture of work within SHU.

In a discussion of whether any of these have been met, it is important to stress that our conclusions can only be tentative at this stage. At the time of writing, the longest that any group has been online is 18 months. A cultural change so fundamental as using a new and different means of communicating with others, be they friends, colleagues, funders or local authorities will undoubtedly take longer than this brief period. Being able to draw wider conclusions about the effects on capacity building, empowerment or social exclusion are perhaps premature, but there is no doubt that each organisation has gained from inclusion in the project. Issues raised and the key factors that influence the way that the Internet is both used and experienced are discussed later in this paper, but here are typical responses which illustrate the project's impact:

> '[Access to the Internet] has brought the world to our doorstep.'
>
> 'Access to the Internet has added a depth to the organisation - as a result of local awareness that we have it, more people now come in and may enrol on courses we provide as well.'
>
> 'It is becoming increasingly difficult to communicate with some people without email now - one consultant we worked with would only send documents by email, not through the post!'
>
> 'The computer has become a central focus of the workshop - we now check our email before we open the post.'

Organisations involved

The sixteen groups included in the project were spread across the region - from South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire - and ranged from unemployed workers centres, to an advice service for people with disabilities, including black groups, women's groups and community development organisations working in areas where the traditional employment (e.g. mining) had disappeared.

Evaluation of the project

The participating groups became involved in two phases between January and September 1998. The evaluation was conducted at two stages in June/July 1998 and 1999. At both stages the process used a questionnaire to gather the more quantitative information, such as how many people were using the computer and the profile of the users (see pie charts below), followed by an interview with a member or members of each group, to elicit the more qualitative information on how the use was developing.

The initial evaluation exercise covered the eight groups in phase one; the second involved all sixteen. The aims of the first exercise were to establish the appropriateness of the training and support, to contribute to improving the process for the second phase and to produce an interim evaluation report, which was subsequently published in December 1998. The second evaluation has recently been completed as the project comes to an end and the final evaluation and report will be published in Autumn 1999.

The results show that -

- Approximately 318 people from the sixteen organisations have made use of the computers and Internet access;
- 112 people have had at least one training session (many of these will have attended more sessions at their bases and at Hallam);
- Access to electronic communication is supporting participating projects in developing and maintaining local, national and international links;
- Information found using the World Wide Web is supporting community groups and organisations in a variety of ways, adding to their capacity to provide local services and resources;
- There was real added value given from having access to a good computer in groups' premises. Reluctant users of the technology found using the Internet a particularly good method of developing IT skills, in an appealing way.

User Profile

The first pie chart shows the breakdown of user by their relationship to the organisation that has the Internet access. This indicates that a high proportion of the users of the equipment are unpaid or 'clients' of the organisation.

Chart One - User Type

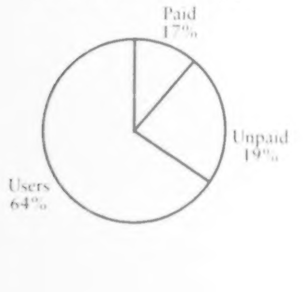


Chart Two - Age Range

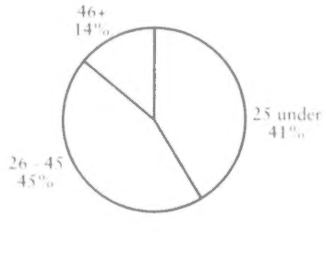


Chart Three - Gender balance

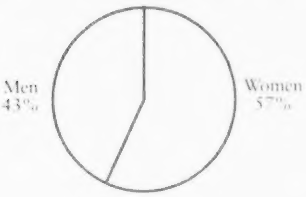
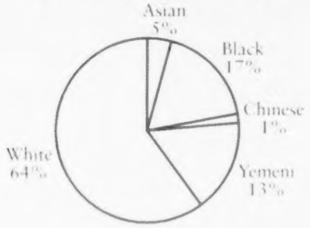


Chart Four - Ethnicity



It is hard to extract truly meaningful findings from the bald data, other than the most general conclusions. In broad terms, the use as illustrated reflects the makeup of the target organisations and their members and users, rather than the general demand for using the Internet, or the benefits of so doing. While graphical information appears to give clear indicators of use, it seems that it also conceals some of the underlying information that will be discussed below, when the more qualitative information is examined.

Electronic data was also collated from SHU computers that give information on how many times and (more recently) how much time groups have used the connection. There has been a consistent use of the dial-in connection to the University. Interestingly there is no clear pattern emerging - sometimes a particular organisation will use it a lot in a week, and the next week hardly at all. Again, the pattern of use will be looked at in more detail later, when the actual use is examined.

What are the computers being used for?

In the course of the final evaluation, a breakdown of how the computers were being used was examined, with the following results:

- All groups reported regular use of the computer for general use (word processing etc);
- All groups used the Web regularly;
- All groups reported increased confidence as computer users of group members through having Internet access;
- 6 (38%) groups regularly used the Internet for finding information produced by the government - legislation, updates on welfare benefits, departmental information;
- 8 (50%) groups had used information found to support funding applications;
- 3 (19%) groups had successfully raised income through fundraising from using the Web;
- 4 (25%) groups indicated that Internet access had supported 'social' use - keeping in touch with relatives, or as a tool to encourage social mixing of the young and older people;
- 8 (50%) groups have so far found email significantly useful to their organisation;
- 3 (19%) groups use the Web in Job search activities and to support job applications through information about potential employees;
- 10 (63%) groups use the Internet for formal educational and training purposes;
- 3 (19%) groups indicated the importance and relevance of developing the contents of their web pages as a useful publicity tool for their organisation.

Patterns of use

Different organisations have developed very different patterns of use, which seem to reflect what they are making most use of - email or the World Wide Web. Checking for messages is quick, where looking for information takes much longer. Some organisations log in many times in a week, but for short periods, where others log in less often, but for longer. One interesting figure that emerges is that over a six-month period between February and August, the average total time that all organisations were online in one week was 27 hours 7 minutes, making an average weekly use per organisation of 1 hour and 48 minutes. How this connection time is used is examined below.

After a relatively short time some of the groups and organisations have become dependent on the Internet, both to communicate with others and to find information on the World Wide Web. Usage patterns depend on a number of factors - for example how confident people are with using computers, how open or closed the group is in terms of membership, whether the computers are sited in a teaching area or an office. Whether significant use is made of email as compared to the Web also depends on where the computer is sited - if used as a teaching resource, then the likelihood is that Web use will be higher.

Using email

As discussed earlier, electronic communication within SHU has become a major tool for the organisation, being used in a variety of ways. This section will compare the experience within the University with that for the project participants.

Where a group has successfully used email in its work, this quickly becomes a critical factor. The SHU-CAN groups where this was found to be the case are those that have existing (non IT) networks, where those networks also use email. The value of this kind of communication has become apparent, and work that may have previously involved many telephone calls or faxes has been simplified through the exchange of messages. An example of this is the work of one of the organisations with the European Anti-poverty Network - arranging face to face meetings has been greatly facilitated as are discussion and debate.

However, developing a network of people to communicate with has not always been an easy task. Many of the groups work with similar groups to themselves and with local authorities where use of email in either sector is still very poorly developed. SHU-CAN groups have not necessarily developed using email as a first choice communication tool, precisely because they have few people to communicate with.

It had also been envisaged that the groups would begin to communicate with each other, but again this did not develop significantly. The reasons for this are probably that the groups did not identify issues in common, and perceived no need to communicate. The project used First Class as its email system, which is also a conferencing tool, and it had been thought to offer useful facilities of enabling easy sharing of information. Reflecting the experience of some lecturers at the University who have seen the potential value of 'conferencing', this only really happens when there is a clearly visible reason to do so (e.g. in the case of students, conferencing has become required as part of some modules).

A feature of the groups selected to be part of the project was that they were typically without well developed IT use - many of them did not have computers at all, or had very limited access to one or two. Experience of working within the University shows that much of the communication that is carried over the email system is internal. The speed and ease with which messages and documents can be transmitted make email ideal for communicating, but there needs to be reasons to do so. There needs also to be organisational change, where electronic communication becomes one of the basic tools of the organisation. When email is used within an organisation that has an IT network, where individuals have their own email addresses, with computers on their desks, this is when it really begins to fundamentally support the work of the organisation.

Using the World Wide Web

Where groups have not significantly developed using email within their work, they have found access to the World Wide Web has proved useful for finding information, and also as a tool to develop their computer skills. Using the Web is an interesting way to develop basic IT skills and some group members have found this a springboard from which to go on to develop a wide range of computer skills.

This seems to confirm findings from similar Information Technology (IT) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) projects with excluded groups. New users of IT should be supported with training that

> '...aim[s] to develop confident users of computers and communication technologies, so that learners are able to explore new applications without immediately needing assistance. Learners should be helped to develop fundamental understanding of IT and confidence in its use: that is, they should become independent learners.'[1998 NIACE]

Many groups have used the information they have found in creative ways. Examples include supporting funding bids, the development of policy documents such as equal opportunities policy, regularly downloading Arabic newspapers to distribute among community members and using information available on air quality to keep informed about the local conditions and seek ways to improve circumstances. Funding information is sought, as are contacts with similar organisations nationally and internationally.

Conversely, there has also been some frustration about the difficulty of finding relevant information, and the quality of existing information on the web. These are common issues for most Web users, and reflect the reality that it is a new medium for publishing information. The SHU-CAN project aimed to offer training in designing basic web pages to at least one or two members of each organisation and to encourage all the groups involved to publish and maintain their own pages on the University web server. As the project draws to a close, most groups have now achieved this. Busy community activists may find the time required to develop their information content hard to release from other pressing work, such as fundraising. In the longer term, it may be that groups find the equivalent of a web page 'manager' or team - ideally from within their organisation, or someone who they contract to maintain their pages. By becoming active as information providers on the web as well as information users, community organisations also become more visible, and this can potentially support capacity building, with opportunities to become involved in creative partnerships with others.

Issues raised

It is clear that the issues raised about the value of access to the Internet to community organisations are complex. The project has succeeded in reaching its target groups, reflected in the data given here. From our experience, it would seem barriers to use of the Internet are the result of organisational restraints and culture rather than attitudes to the Internet.

Key factors that influenced how positive group members were about the Internet, and how successfully their organisations were beginning to use it were:

- *Familiarity with using IT within the organisation:* an organisation that is unused to using computers at all seems to find the introduction of a computer into its base requires major adjustment. There are major training needs in this circumstance;
- *Conflicting demands:* Once the value of a computer (not just Internet access) to an organisation is understood and exploited, this can put heavy demands on its use;
- *Whether someone within the organisation can see a use for the Internet connection and will take a lead.* This is an important factor - if no one is really interested in exploring the possibilities, then they may not be exploited;
- *Existing (non-IT) networks of the organisation:* whether the organisation already has a need and a reason to talk to others locally, regionally, nationally or internationally;
- *Ease of access to the machine, and to training and support in learning to use the Internet.* The computer must be accessible when needed, and there needs to be training and support available to enable the individual to use it;
- *Limitations on use.* There is a clear conflict between making the computers as accessible as possible and maintaining security of the connection to the University. Because of the publicity about the ease of accessing unacceptable material, there was some anxiety about who would be given the passwords, and how use could be effectively monitored. Groups have taken their own steps to develop the systems they have needed, but this awareness has perhaps reduced the numbers of people allowed to use the computer;
- *Costs.* The same conflict exists for groups with limited funds - as there are increasing demands for use of the Internet by group and community members, so the costs increase. Although the project was able to give some support towards payment of the extra telephone costs associated with the Internet access, these costs must continue to be met by the groups budgets after those funds are exhausted. As with all funding issues in this sector, the cost implications need to be carefully considered, but groups typically felt that that the value added by access to the Internet was worth the extra expense.

Conclusions

The SHU-CAN project has demonstrated that excluded groups and communities will make successful use of ICT resources if they are given the right access - with appropriate training and support available. The evaluation has produced limited information about the usage characteristics of the different groups, but has shown positive outcomes in terms of the user profile, and a high proportion of black and older users. The key factors drawn out of the data reflect more on the organisational and cultural issues that arise in the face of introducing ICT to novices and relatively inexperienced organisations.

All the groups that have been part of the SHU-CAN project have enthusiastically embraced the opportunities it has created to learn to use the technology and the Internet. Using email, as indicated in the introduction was thought to be the greatest opportunity, but this has not been their experience on the whole. For email to become a valuable communication tool, there needs also to be a critical mass of others with whom the organisations can communicate. Using the World Wide Web, on the other hand, has given access to useful information, for example, the latest government legislation and papers. Increasingly, access to education and training will be available through the Internet, and experience of use will give advantages to the people who have used the computers and through them to their organisations. Becoming active as 'information providers' on the Web also offers one way that local groups and organisations can become more visible to their users and more widely. This also offers opportunities to make contact with other similar projects, and thereby develop useful contacts and networks.

Use of the Internet is still being explored rather than being used as a fundamental and important part of the organisations' tools for their work. A process needs to take place that Talbot and Newman (1998) refer to as 'a synthesis: matching purpose to technique':

> '...community and voluntary groups need to discover the precise match between their objectives and tasks, the strategic and operational purposes to which they can apply the Internet, and how to use the Internet to achieve these ends. Only when they have mapped out a path from basic access and awareness right through to their work will they be able to get full benefit from community networks and from the Internet.'

This process takes time, and the experience thus gained to benefit the organisation and the individuals within it. There is evidence that groups have taken the opportunities offered, particularly information published on the Web, in creative and useful ways. In many ways the organisations have developed strengths, their members' skills have been enhanced. The next step is to develop a strategy, informed by the experiences gained, to decide how best to make use of the technology.

As a result of the experience of being part of the SHU-CAN project, groups are beginning to recognise that their organisations need to adapt to accommodate Internet access more widely. They are looking at finding the resources required to do so - through acquiring more computers or modems, considering installing a computer network in their premises, or reconsidering where the computer with the Internet access is based.

The SHU-CAN project has given community groups an opportunity to develop skills that are likely to benefit them. The timing of the project has been fortuitous - several regional ICT developments of which SHU is a part, including the local CITINET initiative *(http://www.citinet.org.uk)*, give further justification for the University to be involved in working with local communities in this way. The ideas with which SHU began this project now also tie in neatly with national agendas and initiatives such as the University for Industry. The University sees its role within this as contributing to the capacity building of the region and its people.

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Women, Science and Technology, Role Models and Femininity

Viv Shelley and Jane Inman

Viv Shelley is Director of the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of Durham. Her specific roles include Director of the University's HEFCE funded Widening Participation and CVE Projects and she manages the Part-time (evening) undergraduate degree in Environmental Science and modular Masters in Environmental Chemistry and Pollution Control. In addition she is Project Director, on behalf of the Universities for the North East (previously HESIN), of the HERD funded project which is developing a Regional Framework for Lifelong Learning Awards. In 1992, she attracted funding from Co Durham TEC to develop both the 'prototype' Women Into Science and Technology (WIST) course which featured in a book chapter 1, and a validated Science Access Programme, which was the basis of the current Science Foundation Year at the Stockton Campus. A paper, 'Funding Access to Science by Imaginatively Accessing Funding Sources', summarising these developments, was delivered at the 6th European Access Network Convention in Cork in 1996. Other conference papers resulting from recent research activities include: 'Environmental Management - an Industry/Higher Education Partnership to Raise Environmental Awareness', presented to the Business Strategy and the Environmental Conference, Leeds, 1996; 'Stockton-on-Line (SoL): A Case Study' (with Theresa McGoldrick and Pat Cummins) presented at the 1998 International Conference on Networked Lifelong Learning at the University of Sheffield; and at the 1998 European Distance Education Network (EDEN) Conference in Bologna in 1998.

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Abstract

Eight years after the introduction of the first 'Women Into Science and Technology (WIST)' course at the University of Durham (1), it is equally as popular as a modular OCN accredited programme which offers progression to an innovative science-based Foundation Year and thence to five undergraduate degree courses at the University's Stockton Campus.

In a parallel with the curriculum developments, we have explored the underlying reasons why women opt out of the science 'first time round', yet approach it with a renewed interest and sense of challenge when given a 'second chance'. In an attempt to explain the former we:

present the initial outcomes of an investigation into women's memories of science (2)

question why, almost ten years after the introduction of the National Curriculum in Science, female participation in the physical and biological sciences at A-level is still markedly different

consider whether the subject and gender breakdown of teachers at secondary level is a contributory factor to student choice and whether female science teachers make good role models

review recent thinking on the 'incompatibility' between high academic achievement and femininity (3, 4) and whether a 'blue stocking' image of females in science influences female adolescents.

Finally we attempt to identify the factors which make the 'second chance' experience of science more challenging and enjoyable.

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High and Low Technology Approaches to Learning in Rural Areas

Moira Coleman and John Nicholson

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Abstract

Trailblazer is a Return-to Study programme which caters for adults in rural areas. It is based in Halesworth, a small market town in Suffolk. The project makes a significant use of CD-ROM based materials written by Trailblazer tutors with the aid of a novel authoring package created in house. The Science Starter Programme is an HEFCE project in its final year, widening participation to science in rural areas through non award bearing courses and experiences. The emphasis throughout has been on active learning within relevant contexts. Both projects use a mix of methods, from traditional low technology group work to sophisticated IT-supported independent learning. Both projects have collaborated, using a mix of resources, to introduce science to adults who would normally have little, if any, interest in pursuing it. This workshop will give participants the opportunity to see and try for themselves examples of the materials used, to reflect on the advantages and otherwise of high and low tech supported learning, and to consider related questions e.g. 'does low tech mean low sophistication' and 'how does one approach complement the other?' We will conclude by considering how working together is providing 'learning pathways' for those of our students who show an interest in and an aptitude for science.

Technological Innovation and Social Exclusion

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Abstract

In this paper I shall reflect upon and analyse the outcomes of a pilot project designed to enhance access to technology courses in higher education through the use of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) for course delivery. The students involved were mature Afro-Caribbean and Asian women from an economically disadvantaged urban area and the project addressed issues of inequality and social exclusion in respect of ethnicity and gender as well as investigating the feasibility of using new technologies for learning. The paper will focus on economic, technical and pedagogic concerns in the use of ICTs for teaching and learning and challenge some policy assumptions about the relationship between technological innovation and widening participation in higher education.